STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE
JOHNSON CITY, TENNESSEE

THE Nation

VOLUME CXLII NEW YORK · WEDNESDAY · MARCH 4, 1936 NUMBER 3687

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The Shape of Things

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THE CHANGES WHICH APPEAR IN THIS ISSUE of *The Nation* should speak for themselves. We hope that the physical changes will produce the effect that was intended, namely, one of clarity, vigor, and legibility. The form was designed by Joseph Blumenthal in consultation with all the persons who help to produce *The Nation*. New features and extra pages have been added to meet the necessities of an expanding weekly. It is with particular pleasure and confidence that the editors announce the formation of a board of Editorial Associates comprising Heywood Broun, Alvin Johnson, and our former Editor and recent Contributing Editor, Oswald Garrison Villard. This board will advise on policy and planning and will bring to our editorial councils the varied social and political experience of its three members.

*

BATTLE LINES ARE DRAWING CLOSER IN THE industrial–craft-union fight whose outcome will decide the future form and strength of the American labor movement. William Green, with what seems more like bad temper than good strategy, sent out on February 21 an ultimatum to all labor bodies affiliated with the American Federation of Labor ordering them to have nothing to do with the Committee for Industrial Organization. "The Executive Council," reads the letter, "cannot and will not permit division and discord to divide the forces of the American Federation of Labor. . . ." There was no hint in Mr. Green's pronouncement that the question should be or will be decided by the rank and file. The truth is of course that the rank and file are massed behind the opposing line. The C. I. O. gave Mr. Green not one but three answers. It replied that the C. I. O. is seeking to remove the roots of dualism by making it possible for millions of mass-production workers to enter the A. F. of L. on the only basis they will accept—industrial unions. On the same day the committee announced its support of 30,000 radio workers who recently rejected the executive council's proposal that they become Class B members in the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. A day later the C. I. O. issued its third and strongest answer to Mr. Green. The eight unions represented on it proposed to him an immediate campaign to organize steel. They offered as their contribution trained organizers and $500,000, but they stipulated (1) that organization must be along industrial lines, and (2) that leadership must be such as to inspire confidence of success.

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spire confidence of success. In the face of this terrifying offer Mr. Green at once scurried to cover. It will be referred, he said, to the executive council meeting in May.

*

IN THE NAME OF SOIL CONSERVATION, WHICH is apparently constitutional, the new farm bill manages to give the Secretary of Agriculture powers over farm output as broad as the AAA. It is provided that eventually the states shall take over the task of agricultural regulation; but until that time Secretary Wallace will remain the guardian and manipulator of farm prosperity. He is no longer permitted to enter into contracts with farmers to pay them cash rewards for not producing certain crops, but he may offer cash inducements on a voluntary basis to farmers who are willing to help build up the soil and promote its economic use by withdrawing land from cultivation, preventing its erosion, or improving its fertility. At the same time he is given the task of providing and maintaining a continuous and adequate supply of farm commodities at prices fair to both producers and consumers. The meaning of conservation was even stretched to include a provision in the House bill which directs the restoration of the pre-war purchasing-power parity between agricultural and non-agricultural "net incomes." Those farmers who have benefited from the AAA will no doubt welcome the new bill, and the Administration, by obtaining its passage, will not only maintain farm income but will prevent serious erosion in the Democratic vote. But to the tenants and share-croppers, who comprise two-thirds of the farm population of the South but whose vote, when they exercise it, is controlled by the landlords, the new bill may prove even more disastrous than the old. To be sure, two amendments protecting their interests were inserted in the House bill, but they are no stronger than Section 7 of the AAA contract, and it is quite possible that even these safeguards will be removed in conference.

*

AS FOR THE REST OF THE FARM BILL, TWO experts on the tenant problem, Professor H. Clarence Nixon and Professor Charles S. Johnson, have pointed out in a statement prepared for the Southern Policy Committee that it threatens even greater discriminations against tenants than the AAA. To anyone familiar with the workings of the AAA in the South, the measured words of the committee indicate all too vividly the unmeasured misery in which the cropper may expect to continue.

> The changes in husbandry anticipated by the new farm bill [reads the statement] will inevitably reduce the requirement for farm laborers and displace more tenants. . . . It is possible for landlords . . . to divide their lands in such a manner that tenants will grow cash cotton crops without benefits, while owners grow the feed, seed, and soil-improvement crops which require less labor and yet bring government benefits.

"Is there no voice in Congress," concludes the statement, "to insist upon a sounder agricultural economy in the South?" On the contrary, Chairman Smith of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, when he rose in all his wrath against the House amendment, exclaimed: "What kind of fool thing is this they have adopted? The tenant and the share-cropper get it all now. They are given their share of the crop with no strings on it, while the landowner has to pay taxes and the cost of production, housing, implements, and repairs." Chairman Smith is almost correct. There is only one string on the cropper's share: it is exactly the same kind of string that small boys attach to empty purses on April Fool's day.

*

SECRETARY ICKES, WHO SEVERAL WEEKS AGO declared himself "the most enjoined man in America," has one injunction the less now and a good deal of cause for rejoicing. The United States Circuit Court of Appeals has decided that the PWA had the right to make a grant to Greenwood County, South Carolina, for the construction of a hydroelectric plant. The grounds of the decision are clear: the county has the power to construct such a project, and Mr. Ickes has the right to lend the county money for doing what it has the power to do. It should be difficult for even a hostile majority on the Supreme Court to find a way of torturing so clear a construction of the Constitution. Less clear is the decision in the Public Utility Holding Company case, appealed from Judge William C. Coleman's narrow ruling several months ago—a ruling amazingly partisan even for a conservative district judge. While the Circuit Court holds that the company's activities are intra-state (despite the fact that its subsidiaries sell electric power and water to consumers from Indiana to California), Judge Coleman's sweeping declaration that the entire Holding Company Act is unconstitutional is overruled by the Circuit Court. This still leaves the situation ambiguous. The clearest thing for the Spreme Court to do would be to throw out the entire case on the jurisdictional issue pushed by Justice Brandeis in the TVA case, and address itself to the more direct issue presented by the Electric Bond and Share suit.

*

THE COMING STRUGGLE FOR POWER HAS BEEN converted from a cliché into a present reality—and the power in question is electric power. Despite the fact that the associations of utility executives and investors are insisting that the TVA decision is strictly limited and may prove a Pyrrhic victory for the government (and there is much substance in their contentions), they are none the less terrified at the future. The prospect of a Mississippi Valley Authority, a Columbia Valley Authority, a Red River Authority haunts the waking and sleeping thoughts of those who fear for private enterprise in giant power. And it is true that the figures about the federal dams now under construction are formidable. There are thirty-seven of them, of which nineteen will produce power. The government investment in these dams is approximately a billion dollars, and it is estimated that 6,000,000 horse-power will be produced. The utility executives should be advised that the crucial problem is

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not the issuing of public statements but the struggle over the administration of the power projects. Already that struggle has begun among the legislators from the Northwest in the discussion of plans for administering the Grand Coulee and Bonneville dams. Among the competing plans are a state compact authority and a unified federal authority like the TVA. If only the publicity experts of the utilities could wipe out the efficiency with which the TVA has been administered, both in its construction and its operations, half their battle would be won.

*

FURTHER LIGHT ON THE ASSISTANCE BEING given Mussolini by American business interests is available in the January trade figures just issued by the Department of Commerce. Oil exports to Italy jumped to $1,238,500 as compared with a monthly average of $505,000 in 1934, an increase of 140 per cent; sales of iron and steel scrap were valued at $700,000 as against $186,000, an increase of 325 per cent; and shipments of automobiles, parts, and accessories rose from $61,000 to $127,000, an advance of more than 100 per cent. Since none of these items has yet been embargoed by the League, American sales can scarcely be said to be directly undermining international law. The same cannot be claimed, however, for the growing trade in contravention of the League sanctions. The growth in American imports from Italy from $2,764,000 in January, 1935, to $3,157,000 in January, 1936, tends to offset, to a certain extent, the loss of Italian markets in League countries. Even more ominous is the appearance, for the first time, of substantial American exports of the commodities explicitly barred from Italy by League action. Included under this category are shipments of crude rubber, of which none was exported in 1934, and greatly increased sales of nickel and ferro-alloying metals and ores. Meanwhile, our total exports to Ethiopia declined from $7,454 in January of last year to $866 in January, 1936. Neutrality, apparently, has not changed much since 1914-17.

*

ALTHOUGH THE SENSATIONAL REPORTS OF A new Triple Alliance of Germany, Italy, and Austria against the League powers appear to have been unfounded, there is evidence that Nazi statesmen are working overtime to find an escape from the isolation which the ratification of the Franco-Soviet and the Soviet–Czecho-Slovakian pacts will impose. Göring went on another of his hunting trips in Poland, and the Polish and German Ambassadors at Rome were both unaccountably summoned home. Renato Ricci, Italian Secretary of State for Education, has been talking with German officials at the Winter Olympics, and Colonel Beck, the Polish Foreign Minister, is scheduled to visit Brussels in the hope of influencing certain anti-French Flemish groups. Despite this frenzied activity the chance of a strong anti-League bloc of the Central Powers seems extremely remote. Poland, though desiring to keep on good terms with Germany, does not care to alienate either France or the Soviet Union. Personal animosities as well as fundamental rivalry over Austria are almost certain to stand in the way of a close agreement between Hitler and Mussolini. A Japanese-German alliance against the Soviet Union, which would not necessarily antagonize France and Great Britain, remains the primary danger. The recent raids on Outer Mongolia are believed to have been fomented by Germany in an effort to forestall the ratification of the Franco-Soviet alliance. Any apprehension that they may have aroused in Paris has been more than offset, however, by the glowing reports of the efficiency of the Red Army.

*

THE JAPANESE ELECTIONS ARE NOTEWORTHY chiefly for what happened to the minority parties. No startling upsets and no sweeping victories looking to a pronounced change in policy occurred, but certain small, unexpected gains and losses indicate that Japan has ventured a timid step toward liberalism and away from the reactionary chauvinism that has dominated the country since 1931. Five out of its twenty seats were lost by the party nearest to fascism, three independents representing the military super-patriots were defeated, and the Social Masses Party returned eighteen members instead of the three it had previously had. Industrial labor has become better organized and more class-conscious since the last national election four years ago, and farm labor has been in acute distress. It was inevitable, therefore, that the labor party should have made some gains. That they were as large as they were is attributable not so much to the proletariat's advance in influence as to the "pure-election" rules restricting the use of campaign funds, which helped to equalize the chances of minority and big-party candidates, and to popular disillusionment with the major parties. Otherwise the election was every bit the stalemate it was expected to be. Japan is left with the same rulers as before and with the real issues untouched.

*

THE PROCESSES OF JUSTICE WORK SO SLOWLY for Negroes that if justice is ever won by them it is more a matter of miracle than of retribution. The decision of the United States Supreme Court on February 17 in the case of Yank Ellington, Ed Brown, and Henry Shields caps a whole succession of miracles. The three boys were accused of the murder of a white man, strung up and whipped in order that a confession might be extracted from them, and convicted. Here the first miracle happened. One of the four lawyers who had been assigned by the court to defend them turned out to be a very able and humane white Southerner by the name of John A. Clark, who set for himself the task of compensating by his own humanity and energy for all the wrongs which his fellow-whites had inflicted on the Negroes. The second miracle was Associate Justice Griffiths of the Mississippi Supreme Court, who, even when the majority had denied the appeal of the boys from their conviction, read a magnificent dissenting opinion in which the entire story of the torture of the defendants and the forced confession was set down. The

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climax of the case has now come in an opinion by Chief Justice Hughes in which he sets aside the convictions. The editors of *The Nation* are proud to have printed an article in the issue of December 11, 1935, by Robert W. Horton, which told the story and helped arouse interest in the case.

*

A THOROUGHGOING INVESTIGATION INTO the activities of the Townsend plan was voted in the House of Representatives on February 19. It will be salutary to correct, if possible, the widespread fallacy, with which Dr. Townsend's aged followers console themselves, that the plan is designed to give them a stipend of $200 a month. The bill introduced by Representative McGroarty on April 1, 1935, provided for "a maximum of $200 a month." Anything short of this, down to ten cents, would be clearly within the intent of the act. Yet despite the gross deception practiced on millions of old people throughout the country, it is interesting to compare the Townsend plan with the National Social Security Act. The latter imposes a 6 per cent tax on pay rolls in order to provide for an average of $25 per month to about 50 per cent of the persons over sixty-five, or 3,750,000 pensioners. A group of economists who have recently quite properly criticized the Townsend plan for its absurd claim to be able to provide $200 a month estimate, nevertheless, that under the 2 per cent transaction tax proposed by Dr. Townsend 7,000,000 persons over sixty could probably be given $75 a month. The most important fact that the investigation could bring out would obviously be that necessary and just security to the aged should be financed not by a general sales tax, as in the Townsend plan, or by a tax on wage-earners, as in the present Social Security Act, but by a sharp tax on incomes.

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THE NEW YORK *TIMES*, WHICH ADVERTISES its reputation for integrity, published on Sunday, February 23, a Madrid dispatch which was Hearstian in its combination of misinformation and distortion. It said that "bolshevism has been trying a new weapon in Spain," the united front; that "the united front has put Spain at the mercy of 3,000,000 Socialists, Anarchists, Syndicalists, and Communists, some of whose leaders and organizations are reported to be paid and subsidized from Moscow"; that "instead of opposing socialism, red agents throughout the world have been instructed to work with it." A reactionary newspaper is then quoted as an authority; the list of subsidies to Soviet agents is credited to "well-informed quarters in Madrid"; and finally, running out of authorities, the dispatch concludes with sensations whose source is merely "it was also said." The dishonesty of hiding behind "well-informed quarters" is only equaled by the distortion of raising the Moscow flag on a spontaneous mass uprising which anyone who knows Spain realizes was long overdue. The fact that the dispatch is signed by G. Ward Price, correspondent of the London *Daily Mail*, makes publication by the *Times* all the more reprehensible. No paper in England has been more notoriously pro-fascist.

Have Faith in the Common Man

ONCE every four years progressives in America find themselves thinking politics. And once every four years they find themselves tempted to believe that the choice of the lesser evil is still their best realistic choice. Why is it that there is no strong framework for building a united party of farmers, workers, technicians, and professional people—a party of the common man? This question comes all the more sharply in a political campaign like the present one, with a temporizing liberal arrayed against consistent reactionaries. We may follow John Morley in thinking that compromise is the heart of politics, and we may finally accept compromise. But that does not mean that we must confuse compromise with betrayal.

Many of our readers will remember the muckraking movement of a quarter-century back—a movement which ended only in feverish disclosures of the more revolting aspects of business enterprise. More of our readers will remember the thinned-out sequel of that movement in the period of Mencken and his followers, who used all their spleen and energy and talent in muckraking the American people. We are still tasting the dregs of the latter period. For that reason it is heartening to recite some recent events, picked almost at random, that may help us to rediscover a faith in the common man.

There are the new beginnings in the militant labor movement, represented by the efforts for industrial organization, the rank-and-file spirit, the leadership of such men as Lewis, Hillman, Dubinsky, Gorman, Howard, and Bridges. There has been a new strength and skill displayed in the management of recent strikes, notably the dressmakers' strike in New York, the general strikes at Terre Haute and Pekin, the marble workers' strike at Rutland, and the strike of the Newspaper Guild in Milwaukee. For the first time in American life newspapermen and college teachers and other professional workers have shown an understanding of what it is that gives them a common stake in building and retaining a culture. There are stirrings toward organization even among the share-croppers and tenant farmers of the South. There is, finally, a widespread insistence of the common people on peace and neutrality, a new understanding of what sends a country into war and what produces fascism, even a dawning recognition that the sanctity of the Constitution rests on the personal judgment of nine men.

These are only beginnings. They are, moreover, only the credit side of the ledger, and the debit items are legion. As beginnings they may not compare with the strength of the Labor Party in England, the recent victory of the left forces in Spain, the vigorous development of a common front in France. Yet they are enough to serve as an earnest of more to come, and enough to indicate that the landscape of American life is not as bleak and stripped as *The Nation* has at various times been tempted to view it.

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Moreover, these recent developments are not isolated outcroppings but a natural and continuous growth from our past. If we examine our history we shall find that our culture rests not—as Mr. Morgan would have it—on the leisure class but on the common man. He has kept the predatory course of business enterprise from turning our culture into a shambles or a mining camp. He has insisted on free schools, free worship, free thought, and a free press. He has taken the "American dream," which business enterprise was making wholly an individualistic dream, and given it whatever collective stamp it has had. If his behavior in the present depression has shown a humility and a tendency to accept sheer defeat, it has also shown a heroic capacity for suffering. No successful movements of the common man are ever based on a human material which lacks positive qualities of strength and heroism. And there is no such lack in the American people.

When we have been weak, it is because we have been tied hand and foot to the slavery of those who make our shoddy ideals as they make our shoddy wares. We must now break not merely the economic monopolies that shut us off from making a living but also the monopoly of opinion that shuts us off from making a culture.

We have one thing that will stand us in very good stead in the long run. That is the tradition of progressive and democratic movements since the days of Jefferson. At times it has seemed that these movements have been wearisome repetitions of the same theme, retreading old ground in a familiar and exhausted way. And yet, carefully examined, the course of American progressive thought has not always swung back on itself. When it has come back it has been on a new plane. The popular movements of Jefferson, of Jackson, of Bryan, and of Debs have been the four high points in the life-history of American democracy. We have had successively middle-class democratic movements, the democracy of the frontier, the movements of the agrarians and populists, and finally the militant labor movement. Our task now is not to retreat from these but to find a way of combining them.

We are in a period of synthesis, when forces are at work making for a union between these various groups. Obviously, it will be hard to get started. For the common man has not yet learned that the identity of interest between him and his fellows is greater than the conflict of interest, and that the conflict of interest between him and the owning classes is greater than the identity of interest. It will take time and ever greater pain than he has suffered so far to teach him this. But he will learn in the end. He will learn that the liberalism of the T. R.-Wilson tradition from which the present Roosevelt descends is thin and pallid, and that whatever Republican liberalism exists is thinner still. He will learn finally that while organization is the essential condition of political action, more is required before he can take over the responsibility of governing America. And that additional factor is the detailed and realistic knowledge of how the going system works and what can be done to make it work better.

Have faith in the common man. But faith in him will not be enough. We must also help him to equip himself with organization and knowledge.

The Tax Debacle

REPORTS from Washington on the tax situation continue to be vague and unrewarding. One day it is rumored that the Administration will meet the growing apprehension regarding the budget by levying additional income taxes. The next we are assured that it will do nothing of the kind, but will confine itself to a reimposition of the processing taxes. These statements are so evidently trial balloons that we may be sure no comprehensive tax program will emerge unless public opinion demands it.

The incessant conservative outcries against the New Deal have served to conceal the fact that no Administration since the World War has followed such a dangerous and reactionary tax policy as the present one. It is true that the President pushed through substantial increases in inheritance and income-tax rates on persons of great wealth. But as *The Nation* pointed out at the time, these changes were of little practical importance to our general tax structure. At most it was estimated that the increase in revenue from the new rates would not exceed $250,000,000, which is insignificant compared with the billions obtained from the masses in taxes, direct and indirect, on articles of everyday use. In the last fiscal year the United States government obtained only about a third of its total revenue from graduated taxes, such as the income, inheritance, and gift levies. The amount derived from the stamp tax on tobacco alone was 40 per cent of that obtained from the income tax. Processing taxes, which are little more than glorified sales taxes on the necessities of life, brought in half as much as the income levy, while customs receipts were a third as large. For every dollar extracted amid painful protests from the well-to-do, the government has been quietly appropriating two from those least able to afford it. Although it is true that the rich are also consumers and as such bear part of the levies on consumers' goods, the relative amount of their income devoted to living expenses is much less than that of individuals in the lower-income brackets.

The Roosevelt Administration cannot be held entirely accountable for this unsound tax structure. The greater part of it was inherited from the Republicans, who achieved no noticeable reforms in the twelve years that they were in power. Nevertheless, the two primary tax measures enacted under the present Administration have gone farther toward redistributing wealth from the bottom to the top than anything adopted in the heyday of Republican rule. The processing taxes, for example, represented an extremely heavy impost on articles of which the poor alone are heavy purchasers—flour, bread, pork, lard, cotton goods, and, under the Warren Act, potatoes. The processing taxes are relatively unimportant, however, as compared with the enormous pay-roll levies imposed by the Social Security Act. At the outset, in 1936, this tax amounts only to $228,000,000, but it increases rapidly until it reaches the staggering sum of $2,783,000,000 in 1950, of which at least $1,000,000,000 will be borne di-

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rectly by the workers, while the remainder, theoretically levied on the employers, will be passed on to the consumers in the form of increased prices. A more effective method of forcing the poor to shoulder the burdens of capitalist insecurity could scarcely have been devised.

If these vast sums were immediately to be redistributed among the working class, the net effect on the economic system would not be harmful. But apart from small appropriations, totaling $94,000,000 in 1936, made as grants-in-aid to the states for old-age assistance, child welfare, and public health, regular benefits will not be paid on the old-age pensions until 1942 or on unemployment insurance until 1939. The aggregate payments of old-age benefits will not equal the aggregate receipts in any year until after 1966, by which time there will be an accumulated reserve of nearly $40,000,000,000. According to the law, this tremendous reserve can only be used for the retirement of the national debt. Thus the final outcome of the Social Security Act will be to relieve taxation on the wealthy and to accentuate the maldistribution of wealth which lies at the root of economic instability.

Quite apart from the question of justice, it is evident that something must be done to reverse the present trends in taxation if the United States is to escape a repetition of the disasters of the past few years. The studies of the Brookings Institution have shown that the tendency toward oversaving underlies many of our economic difficulties, and that two-thirds of the savings in the country are accumulated by the fortunate few who have incomes of more than $10,000 annually. The indecently rich—those with incomes above a million—are fairly heavily taxed under the present laws, but there remains a great class with incomes ranging from $5,000 to $100,000 who pay a very inadequate tax. If this group were forced to assume a fair share of the burden, there would be no need to look elsewhere for a source of new revenue.

Spain Moves Left

THE Spanish workers and peasants have again repudiated the blood-and-hunger rule of feudal landlords who, minus a king, attempted to duplicate the old regime in the name of God, the army, and St. Ignatius Loyola. Given unity among the left group, such a result was practically inevitable in view of the relative strength of the organized parties, which were recently officially given as follows:

Socialists: dues-paying members	1,444,474
Syndicalists and Anarcho-Syndicalists	1,577,547
Communists	133,266
Rightist organizations, total membership	549,946

The total population of Spain is around twenty-three million. Of these about three-fifths are agricultural laborers, share-croppers, and tenant farmers. Most of the land is owned in large estates, held by a tiny minority. There is only a very small number of solvent small landowners; all the rest are hopelessly mortgaged to usurers and on familiar terms with starvation. All the non-owning land workers are, according to the story-books, conservative royalists and pious Catholics; but direct conversation with them reveals that the most conservative are Azaña republicans, and they are exceptions. As a rule they are Anarchists, Socialists, or Communists, in that order.

The rest of the country groups into an industrial proletariat of about six million, perhaps one or two million petty bourgeois and professionals, and at most a half-million prosperous, upper-middle-class landowners and aristocracy. The six million proletariat are all leftist. The petty bourgeois are republicans, with a strong tendency towards anti-clericalism and anti-militarism. The conservatives, including royalists, fascists, and Gil Robles clerico-fascists, number at most one million. They were able to enter the government at all, during the elections of 1933, because the left parties all ran separate tickets and because the petty-bourgeois radicals (Lerroux) united with them. Spain's electoral law requires majority votes in each district, which means that an organized minority can and often does defeat several disorganized majorities.

In the recent elections three very important factors swung Spain to the left. First, there were only two sides to take—the labor parties and left-wing republicans on an anti-fascist program, or the right of church and army. The "center" was a complete fiction comprising government officials, the Lerroux party having disappeared in the ooze of dozens of "Teapot Domes." Second, there were 30,000 political prisoners, which led Anarcho-Syndicalists to vote for the second time in their lives. Third, attempts to introduce a kind of Dollfuss fascism had been met, a year ago, with insurgent resistance on a heroic scale; and that insurrection was the beginning of new revolutionary strength.

Let no one deceive himself as to the meaning of an Azaña republican Cabinet under these circumstances. It is a government that exists and governs entirely by virtue of labor support, specifically Socialist. The truth is that there is a split in the Socialist Party over the question of taking power. It is the Prieto wing, the reformist republican faction, that backs Azaña with real enthusiasm. To the others the present Cabinet is a temporary expedient, a power only because none of the labor parties so far have the strength, or the boldness, to take the power directly. None dares take it by itself, and the united-front councils are not yet strong enough nationally to assume leadership. The reason for that is the strong anti-revolutionary pull within the Socialist Party, and the strong anti-Socialist pull in Anarcho-Syndicalist ranks.

All the leaders are, however, suffering enormous pressure leftwards. The country is bankrupt, unemployment increases steadily, and in most peasants' and workers' homes the question of food is a daily problem. The demands for lasting relief, for jobs, for the merest necessities will either force Azaña to undertake revolutionary reforms, or force him out. In any case the position of the Azaña Cabinet, because it is composed mainly of the same timid men who dodged the job of land and labor reform five years ago, is extremely precarious. Except for the personalities involved, the Kerensky-October analogy has a good deal of truth in it.

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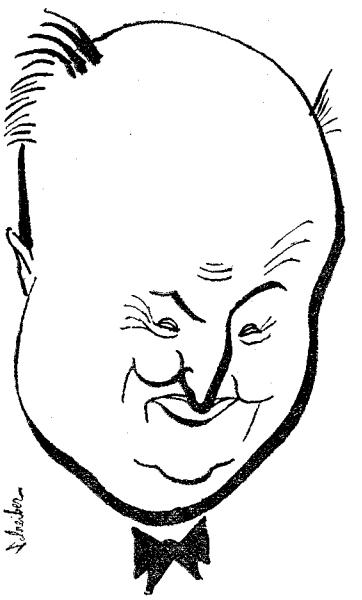
WASHINGTON WEEKLY

BY PAUL W. WARD

Washington, February 23

THIS dispatch might be captioned Bastardy in the Public Works program, for it is to deal chiefly with one of those projects that keep Administrator Ickes shouting, "It's not *my* baby! It's not *my* baby!"

There are a lot of projects that are not Honest Harold's "babies" even though he is both Public Works Administrator and chairman of the President's Advisory Committee on allotments out of the $4,000,000,000 work-relief fund. There are projects that no self-respecting man would want to claim as his own. The whole nation has heard about some of them—the Passamaquoddy tidal-power project and the trans-Florida ship canal, for example—but only a few of its citizens have heard about the one that seems to me the worst of all. I refer to the $30,000,000 Thomas Jefferson Memorial project at St. Louis.



Farley the Fixer

The story begins back in 1934. St. Louis having elected a Democratic mayor, Bernard F. Dickmann, ex-head of the city's real-estate exchange, it occurred to a bunch of the boys that here was an excellent opportunity to unload upon the federal government some thirty-seven blocks of loft buildings and the like along the municipality's river front. They proposed to raze the buildings, park the area, erect in its center a Taj-Mahal-like structure, and call the result a memorial to the President who arranged the Louisiana Purchase. To that end, they had a resolution introduced in Congress appropriating $30,000,000 for the memorial.

It was an audacious request. St. Louis already had one memorial to Jefferson, a large stone building erected in Forest Park at the time of the World's Fair. Secondly, it involved asking approval for a memorial at St. Louis from a Congress that for years has been haggling fruitlessly over plans to build a Jefferson memorial in the nation's capital. Then, too, there was the breath-taking magnitude of the proposition; the Washington monument had cost about $1,000,000, the Lincoln Memorial about $10,000,000. The proposed Jefferson memorial was to surpass them and rival Bonneville Dam and Passamaquoddy. And there was yet another factor to be considered—the project's sponsors proposed to sell back to the government at $325,000 an acre land that the government had bought in 1803 for four cents an acre and sold to settlers at $1.25.

The resolution never got out of committee. Convinced that there was no chance of its being adopted, its sponsors had substituted for it a resolution creating the "United States Territorial Expansion Commission." It would have called for a "Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission" had not Congress nine years earlier set up just such a commission for a memorial here, and at its last session given it a working fund of $15,000. Senator Clark slipped the "Territorial Expansion Commission" resolution through the Senate without effort. It encountered difficulties in the House, where members of the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission assailed the resolution for just what it subsequently turned out to be—an opening wedge for the $30,000,000 memorial project at St. Louis.

However, when the resolution was brought up at a night session of the House in June, 1934, its backers there vigorously denied that the proposed commission would come back to Congress with requests for federal funds. They denied that the resolution was an "opening wedge," and they pointed out that it contained a provision specifically prohibiting the commission from incurring any expense to the federal government.

So the resolution was passed by a vote of 115 to 15, and the commission later brought forth its plan. After months of meditation it had decided that there should be a $30,000,000 Jefferson memorial project covering thirty-seven blocks of St. Louis's waterfront. The next step was to get the Missouri Legislature to pass an act enabling St. Louis to float $7,500,000 in bonds to help the federal government pay for the project. The act specified that St. Louis could issue the bonds when, as, and if the federal government agreed to put up $3 for every $1 put up by the city.

On August 15 last the commission applied to the PWA for $22,500,000, the federal share of the project's cost. Then, on September 12, St. Louis held its mandatory referendum on the bond issue. Although the PWA had made no commitment, the project's sponsors for weeks before the election closed their eyes to that fact. In huge advertisements urging the voters to approve the bond issue they asserted that "actual work [on the project] can start ten days after the bond issue is approved." These advertisements also said "the memorial will become part of the national-parks system and will be maintained by the federal government forever without any cost to the city." The chief argument advanced in behalf of the bond issue was that the project would at once create 5,000 new jobs.

Even so, the ballot boxes apparently had to be stuffed to

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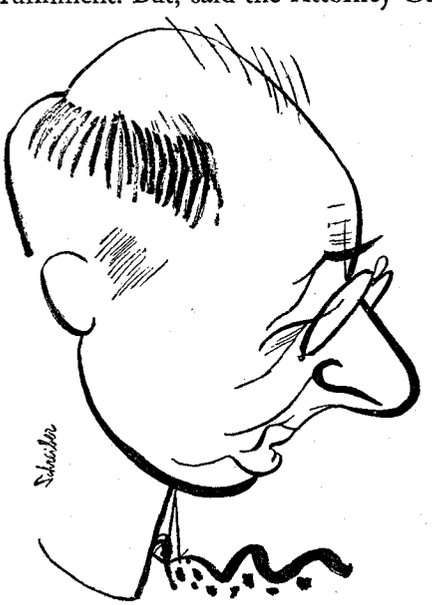
carry the election for the bond issue. The vote went against it in the residential wards. It was the vote in the machine wards that carried the day, with 95 per cent of the registered vote being cast in some of their precincts and more than 100 per cent in others. Shacks without a single bed turned out to be the residences of from fifty to a hundred voters. The only organized opposition to the project came from the fur, feather, and wool traders and the other manufacturers located in the buildings to be razed to make room for the memorial. They objected to the expense of having to move into higher-cost areas.

With the bond issue approved, the project's sponsors put pressure on Washington for favorable action on their $22,500,000 application. September and October passed without such action resulting, and in November a delegation came to Washington from St. Louis to force results. At the White House on November 18 they were met with a five-page opinion from Attorney General Cummings that caused some of them actually to weep and all of them to go scurrying home. The opinion was in the form of a letter to the President. It said Mr. Roosevelt had sent to the Attorney General for scrutiny an executive order under which, on receipt of $7,500,000 from St. Louis under the terms of the state enabling act, the federal government would take over and construct the Jefferson memorial project. Mr. Cummings noted that the order did not say that the federal government would put up $22,500,000, but he said it meant the same thing.

He also said that under the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935 Mr. Roosevelt had power to issue such an order—if he had $22,500,000 to spend in its fulfilment. But, said the Attorney General, the President did not have $22,500,000 to spend on such a project, and his order therefore was illegal, because he could not commit the government to spending funds that had not yet been appropriated by Congress.



Cummings Said No

Then, in December, Mayor Dickmann came back to Washington alone and announced that he intended to remain until he got the project money he was after. He went to see Forbes Morgan of the Democratic National Committee. He went to see Jim Farley and Homer Cummings. He also saw Roosevelt. And he did a great deal of desk-pounding to force home his point that, if the Administration proposed to carry St. Louis next November, it would have to help Mayor Dickmann fulfil the promises made to the electorate there at the time of the bond election. The Mayor panicked them all, with the result that Harry W. Blair, an Assistant Attorney General, was put to work to find a way around the Attorney General's November 18 opinion. Mr. Blair, a Missourian and the husband of Emily Newell Blair, turned up the Historic Sites Act, passed last August, declaring the preservation of historic sites and buildings to be a national policy.

It then devolved upon the Interior Department to discover reasons why those thirty-seven blocks of waterfront property in St. Louis were historic. The Interior Department turned not to the standard historians but to the brochure of the project's sponsors, and on December 21 there issued from the White House an executive order finding that the St. Louis project came under the Historic Sites Act. Mr. Roosevelt gave nine reasons why the site was historic and ought to be preserved. Six of those reasons dealt with buildings. Four of the buildings no longer exist. Of the remaining two, one is a Catholic cathedral, the other a courthouse deeded to the city for use solely as a court house. (It is the house in which the Dred Scott case was tried.) The other three reasons had to do with events. At this site, said the President, the Lewis and Clark expedition "outfitted," and here the Santa Fé and Oregon trails "originated." The standard authorities on these last three happenings place them at sites from 20 to 250 miles away from St. Louis.

The story does not end at this point, for Roosevelt had to do more than find that the thirty-seven blocks were historic. He also had to find funds. To accommodate him, the size of the project was scaled down temporarily to $9,000,000, just as the $30,000,000 Passamaquoddy project had been scaled down to $7,000,000 for a starter and the $200,000,000 Florida ship canal was pared down to $5,200,000. It was agreed that St. Louis would put up only $2,250,000 at the beginning and that the federal government would match this on a three-to-one basis as the enabling act required. But the terms under which the PWA operates did not permit it to put up all of the $6,750,000 federal share. So the PWA's outlay was limited to $3,450,000. Mr. Roosevelt dipped into the WPA's funds for the $3,300,000 balance.

There are a number of other details that remain to be mentioned. One is that in order to scrape up the $6,750,000 for the boys in St. Louis Mr. Roosevelt had to cancel a commensurate amount of allotments to bona fide works projects in various parts of the country. Another is that the manufacturers resident in the project area are contesting the bond issue's validity, with the result that the whole project is tied up in the courts. A third is that straight across the memorial site there runs an elevated railway which is to be regarded as "a fixed and permanent realty" according to the instructions given architects submitting designs for the memorial.

Finally, there is the fact that five blocks from the project site is St. Louis's "Hooverville," a river-front community in which some four hundred unemployed families live in packing cases and similarly improvised shelters, denied decent housing by city, state, and federal administrations that have millions to spare for memorials to the dead, the enrichment of real-estate speculators, and the furtherance of their own petty ambitions.

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Buzz Windrip—Governor of Georgia

BY BENJAMIN STOLBERG

WHEN I first met His Excellency he seemed curiously familiar. Then I remembered. I had seen his look in the illustrations of the Java or Cro-Magnon man in the history books, that queer gaze—wistful, calm, yet puzzled—which the artist always so miraculously conjures up from a prehistoric tibia, two molars, and a knee cap. His Excellency's face is round, dark, almost coffee-colored, flattened with a suggestion of Stone Age concavity. The mouth is wide, fleshy, firm, upturned at the corners. The nose is short and flat. The Indian hair is straggly. But the main thing is the eyes. They peer through thick glasses, cold and cruel, yet somehow groping for horizons beyond their reach. When in repose His Excellency looks withdrawn and dimly thoughtful. But when shaken by his deeply reactionary passions he turns ferocious.

After you get to know the Governor a little better—and talk to folks who know him plenty—it dawns on you that he is not really reactionary, say, like Mr. Hoover or Colonel Knox. He is fanatically atavistic. His bigotries are all primitive. His views actually are those of the Stone Age man. He really believes that there should be no relief *a-tall*—"Let 'em starve!' This does not mean that His Excellency has the simple integrity of his prototype, for his political set-up is like nothing so much as the rigged slot machine in a third-rate saloon. It is vulgar, shabby, and transparent. But none the less Eugene Talmadge honestly believes that Jeffersonian democracy, the perversion of which is his guiding star and his main source of income, presupposes a cave-man economy.

His demagogy too is primitive, not cynical. It is a straight appeal to political sadism and economic brutality. Gene Talmadge is incapable of fooling people with a Share Our Wealth scheme. He could no more think up a crackbrained EPIC or Townsend or technocratic plan than could Caliban. He thinks not in plans but in bigotries. He hates the New Deal not critically but blindly. This, of course, may have something to do with the callousness of a federal administration which threw even as high a dignitary as one of the Governor's Cabinet members off the relief rolls, not to mention various lesser lights. This alone would have made the New Deal "communistic." Still, one must give him credit for disliking it on more philosophical grounds. He hates the New Deal because it takes a formally educated bureaucracy to get lost in its mazes. And he is violently anti-intellectual. The very thought of the Brain Trust makes him apoplectic. His ideal statesman is a dirt farmer, striding toward dictatorship with "grist in his gizzard" and manure squashing in his shoes. Eugene Talmadge is proud of the Georgia chain gang. He believes in treating every Negro as a perpetual helot and potential rapist. He insists on paying no more than five cents an hour to common labor and ten cents an hour to skilled labor under the State Relief Administration, which gives out no relief whatever. He paroled three prisoners to take jobs as strike-breakers. He is politically affiliated, on the quiet if possible and in the open if necessary, with all the leading vigilante organizations in the state.

To Gene Talmadge the New Deal is another Reconstruction, if not another Sherman's March through Georgia, and its officials are just a lot of carpetbaggers. Of course, he will also make a speech in memory of Lincoln in Springfield, Illinois. But that's because, in this cockeyed world, Northern Republicans, unlike their forbears in the 1860's, will help defray expenses toward a Cracker dictatorship in the darkest South.

II

His Excellency made himself comfortable in his favorite armchair. He stretched his legs, he licked and lighted a cigar and puffed a while. Then he proceeded to lose himself in thought. At last he pensively observed: "What Ah'll never foh'give Franklin Roosevelt is that he killed religion in the hahts of the American people."

It was obviously my move next. "Develop that idea, Governor," I suggested.

"Well," His Excellency continued, "Take Mrs. Talmadge there. She was always helpin' fohks. There wasn't a man, woman, or chile—white or culled—but what she'd take care of them." Two illustrations of Mrs. Talmadge's loving kindness followed. "But now," and for a fleeting moment the armchair rose into a stump, "now that every loafer has the guvment suppoht him and his fam'ly, Mrs. Talmadge and thousands like her need no longer exercise the chah'ty in their hahts." The stump once more became the philosopher's armchair. "Yassuh, the New Deal killed chah'ty. And chah'ty is all there is to religion, at least mah way of thinking. Roosevelt made a bunch of bums of the American people."

After this amazing syllogism, it seemed best to come down to earth. "What did you think of Huey Long?" I asked. The mention of the late Kingfish pleases Mr. Talmadge. For part of Huey Long—the able, daring, magnetic part—reminds him strongly of himself. It gives him the chance to sketch the outline, in a few swift strokes, of his self-image.

"Huey and Ah were mighty good friends," he began without fear of contradiction. And, indeed, Huey had helped Gene to the tune of 15,000 electoral dollars; had even made a vague deal with him to place him as running-mate on a possible third ticket, before he finally decided, toward his very end, that Gene was "too dumb for his ambition."

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"Ah lahked Huey because he was able, fearless, had a lot of hoh'se sense and believed in doin' things." The process of psychological identification with the political genius of the dead dictator was almost visible. But, in his own eyes, Talmadge is far deeper than the Kingfish. He is also a political philosopher. "Of coh'se," he continues, "you must realize that Huey and Ah were at the opposite pole in our poh-litical philosophy. Huey believed in doin' ever'thing foh the people. That's bound to weaken their fiber. Ah b'lieve the less guv'ment the bettah."

In short, to himself Eugene Talmadge is a modern Andrew Jackson, combining the best features of the opportunistic talents of the Louisiana dictator with the Democratic libertarianism of Thomas Jefferson. It is as a model Jacksonian that he broke the textile strike in 1934—for an advance "campaign contribution" paid in cash to a go-between, of which more later. It is as a modern Jeffersonian that he put hundreds of workers into an open concentration camp by the use of an illegally executed martial law, which has never been rescinded, and which to this day makes it a crime in Georgia to picket within "a radius of 500 feet" of any national guardsman, no matter where he may chance to be. It is as a Jeffersonian Democrat that he advocates week after week the whole program of the Liberty League in the *Statesman,* a sheet of which "The People" is the editor and Eugene Talmadge merely the associate editor. And it is especially in the spirit of the sage of Monticello that he would "abolish all relief."

"But, Governor," I interrupted while he was getting excited about his favorite theme of "no relief whatever," "what would you do for the millions of unemployed? In New York City we have about a million and a quarter people on relief or WPA work. Without either they would literally starve."

"Let 'em starve!" His Excellency roared. "Any man can find a job if he really wants to work. Besides, there will be all the jobs we need if we cut out all this coddling and boondoggling for which American business is made to foot the bills, and which keeps us from recovery. Industry will go up exactly as we cut down on this taxation and let it alone. What you need in New York is not LaGuardia but Mussolini. A little castor oil would go a long ways toward starting the wheels of industry goin' again."

III

Nationally, Talmadge is losing steadily. He is a small central Georgia politician with delusions of grandeur. He lacks the crazed afflatus and the hysterical talents of the effective modern dictator. His imagination is not neurotic but just feeble. He overreaches himself not only in the long run but with every other step. And his fight with the national Democracy has killed his chances of succeeding Russell in the Senate. Not Talmadge but Roosevelt, Georgia's "adopted son," controls the state in its national orientation.

Within the state Talmadge is by no means dead. A rotten-borough system which enables each of the 159 counties to vote through an electoral college makes it difficult to defeat a demagogue once he is in, for the smallest and most backward county can always match three votes against the six of Fulton County (Atlanta). In his last campaign Talmadge lost only three counties, the big city counties. He may run, and may be reelected for a third term, though the constitutionality of this is challengeable, for recently Georgia changed the two-year gubernatorial term to four and excluded reelection. But he can go no farther than the governorship, especially if he is foolish enough to oppose Roosevelt in a preferential primary in March. He would be snowed under.

Yet for all his decreasing personal importance Talmadge is socially significant. He is even nationally significant as a symptom of regional infection. These next few years may grow a crop of such black-belt Windrips in the New South, Klansmen without the name, appealing to the lowest social passions, to racial and religious hatreds, and to the proliferating vigilante movements. These new Tillmans and Vardamans and Heflins represent essentially the same social forces they always did, but with a difference. They have learned from fascism. They integrate their bigotries with legal violence. A number of such Cracker governments with coalescing tendencies is quite possible. Indeed, the rising reactionary forces in the New South are pressing in this direction.

The New South has been "new" ever since Reconstruction. For, after all, the Civil War was fought to force the South into an expanding industrial economy against its own tradition. And this conflict between two civilizations, the native but collapsing culture of chattel feudalism and the imposed but necessarily victorious forces of modern capitalism, has been raging below the Mason and Dixon Line ever since. What really happened in the South during the last sixty-five years was that it was allowed the full autonomy of its indigenous bigotries but was colonized economically. That was the great compromise. But this compromise, far from healing, has kept on splitting Southern society. And the World War finally dislocated its entire class structure. The New South is "new" in that the split in its culture has ripped apart its ancient semi-feudal class relations.

The old ruling class, the plantation aristocracy, in whose name Southern culture still parades before the world, *literally exists no longer.* Not that it is run-down, shabby-genteel. It is dead and rotting; its corpse has never been removed by history. The descendants of the Southern aristocracy, in so far as they have not been assimilated to the American empire, are the petty Babbittry, the small half-educated professional and business and land-owning fry, with a White Womanhood to match. The Southern plantation of Stark Young's and Allen Tate's nostalgic imagination is in reality a Babbitt warren. The members of the quondam aristocracy form today the upper layer, especially psychologically, of the "poor white trash," and keep its racial obsessions alive. It is the pressure from this anti-proletarian top layer of the white masses which serves to exacerbate regional chauvinism and to deepen mass bigotry.

Of course there are thousands of civilized people in the South. But be they Southern-born or not, they are the products of the imperialist process which has colonialized the South. The ruling class in the South today is just big busi-

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ness, Northern-controlled, and its personnel comes from everywhere. And both the ruling and the educated classes are now what they are by virtue of having come in contact with Northern industry and finance, Northern labor, Northern reaction or radicalism, and Northern education. Only their accent is Southern. Even the Commission on Interracial Cooperation, whose feeble efforts are so splendidly publicized, is Northern-financed and run. At last the spirit of Thaddeus Stevens has conquered the South. But, alas, this same spirit has gone Liberty League, which is encouraging and subsidizing the revival of the Ku Klux Klan under other names.

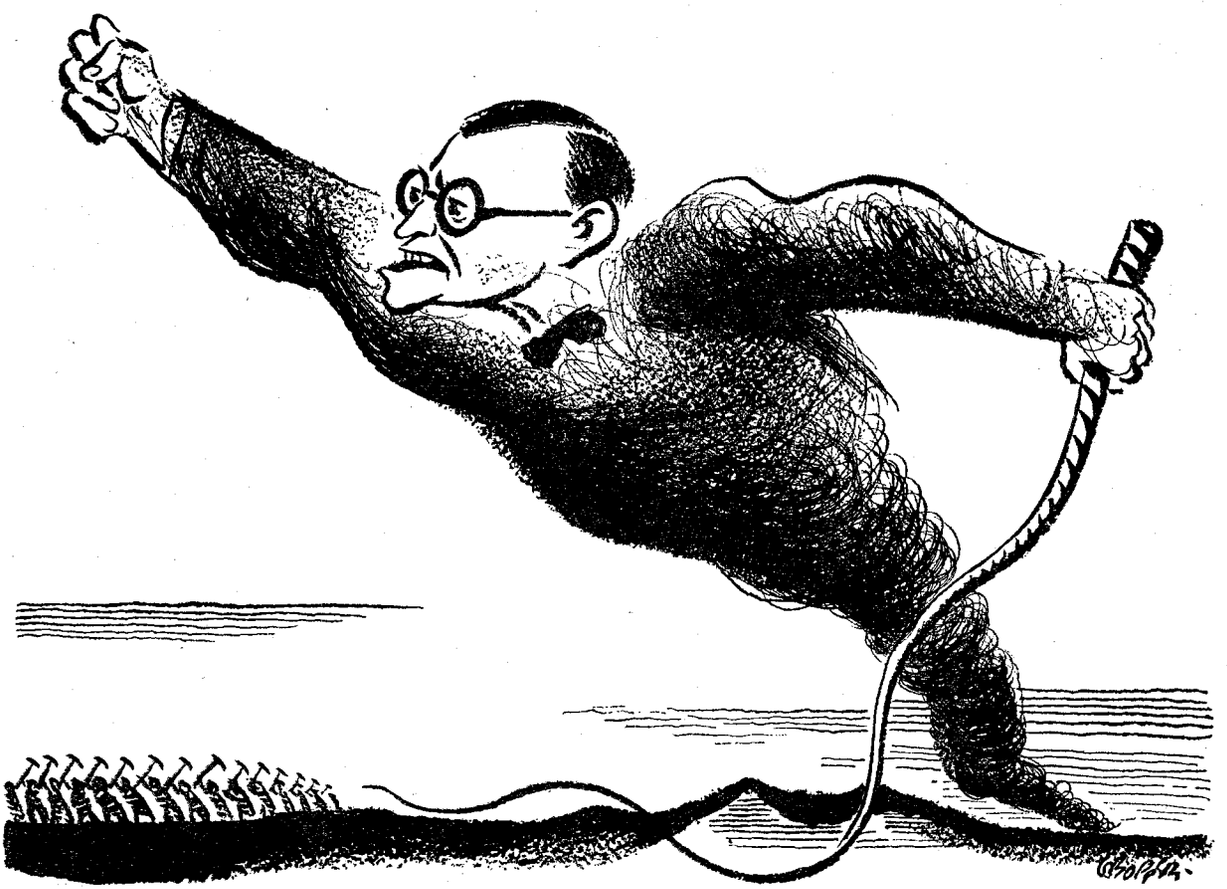
The situation, however, is far more complicated. As in all contemporary colonial countries a reverse process of profound radicalization is also going on. For while, in general, the Southern mill worker, the tenant farmer, the share-cropper are poor and ignorant, they have not been spoiled by the corrupting forces of Northern industrialism. The Southern worker who exchanges Tobacco Road for the mill village has not been emasculated by half a century of "pure and simple" trade unionism. And the Southern poor farmer has not been completely middle-classed by the politicians of the Northern granges. The Southern masses today are literally backward colonial masses, with all the cultural disadvantages but also with the awakening radicalism of their kind. When traveling in the South one is torn by a sense of hopelessness at its cultural backwardness but also by the conflicting sense of an almost revolutionary atmosphere. In the coming decade either this growing restlessness will be defeated by petty regional demagogue-dictators in the pay of big business or the white and black masses will free themselves from their racial barbed-wire entanglements and develop an authentic radicalism which may yet astound the world.

In the meantime, however, the new demagogue is busily at work. He is the political pimp of the economic and social realignments and confusions, worse confounded by the economic crisis. He is the barker for the rising regional bigotries—hence his vulgarity. He appeals to the growing rural pauperism and disaffection—hence his fake radicalism. And he invariably sells his following, either for power or money or both, to the big Northern-controlled interests in the city—hence his corruption.

Of all these latter-day demagogues Huey Long was the most brilliant and dangerous because he exercised the widest appeal by giving a good deal to the masses, so that when he finally got ready to cash in on his influence, toward the very end of his life, he was beginning to command his own price in terms of national power. Talmadge is the most brazen and cheapest of these post-war demagogues, and hence the most transparent. In Huey's case it was hard to tell, even for himself, just where his lower-middle-class radicalism left off and where his demagogy started. In Talmadge's case his "radicalism" began and ended with a fake three-dollar automobile-license-tax. This is why he has no machine and no mass prestige worth very much. This is why his recent "Grass Roots Democratic Convention" was worth just about $5,000 to Wall Street.

In the next section I shall try to show how Eugene Talmadge rose to power, and what for.

[*Mr. Stolberg's article on Governor Talmadge will be concluded in next week's issue.*]



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The British Arms Inquiry

BY HAROLD J. LASKI

London, February 8

THE Nye committee had profound repercussions in England, and almost from its inception the demand was urgent for a similar inquiry here. But the response was of a kind to be expected from a man of Mr. MacDonald's temper and outlook. He set up a Royal Commission, but its personnel was both tame and old. It did not, for example, contain a single Socialist representative; its terms of reference were limited; it had no compulsory power to call for documents; and it was unaccompanied by any such investigation of the archives of the munitions firms as would prove the basis for an adequate examination.

The result is what might have been expected. The critics of the system of private ownership have presented a persuasive case, mainly based either on general principles or on such scattered materials as have leaked out in the last thirty years. It has been well done. The critics have showed ability, directness, a coherent point of view. But inevitably, from the absence of investigation, the case they have been able to make has lacked a wide basis of detailed fact such as would have dramatized the inquiry for the general public.

The commission has heard a good deal of evidence from the main munitions firms—Vickers, Hadfields, the Imperial Chemicals Industry, the aviation companies. But very little decisive material has been elicited from them. That is due to two factors. In the first place, since the archives of the munitions firms have not been opened, the commission's questions have been limited by ignorance of their inner activities; and in the second place they have been able to claim that whatever they did, whether in the realm of sales or of research, was done with the knowledge and approval of the British government. Two or three of the members of the commission—notably the war correspondent, Sir Philip Gibbs—have in a gentlemanly way questioned the witnesses with some closeness on matters of general principle. But I think it is a fair summary of nine months' work to say that things are much where they were before the commission began.

No doubt it is clear that the interlocking interests of Vickers with foreign armament makers is proved; no doubt the aviation companies sell planes to our foreign rivals; one company admits that its best anti-aircraft gun—which the British government has refused to buy—is largely sold abroad; there is admission that indirect bribery may take place, that certain agents of the companies have also, for periods of time, been correspondents of the leading British newspaper, that an occasional large subscription is made to one or another of the militarist organizations. It is true that Mr. Noel-Baker stated brilliantly the case for the nationalization of the munitions industry, and that the case against it was handled very feebly by the representatives of the armament companies. But it is almost certain that the commission will not report in favor of nationalization. If it did, this government would hardly interfere in the existing organization of the industry.

I have always been associated with those who were opposed to any arms inquiry set up by this government. It was bound to be an inquiry intended to whitewash the munitions firms. Except Sir Philip Gibbs, and he only in a very general way, none of the members had any special knowledge of the problem. The chairman is a very old judge, long retired from the bench; there are a distinguished professor of comparative law, a cooperator now well over seventy, a liberal ex-editor nearly eighty years of age, Dame Rachel Crowdy, who is an ex-official of the League, and some miscellaneous members of the type we usually put on a government inquiry. With no power to call for documents and no experts to cross-examine the witnesses, a session of the commission is a quiet and genial interchange of views from which the essential background is wanting. When it is over, the left will, quite rightly, say that the government prevented any real examination of the problem, and the government, with equal truth, will say that a most highly respected body of men and women have found that the munitions business in England—unlike, of course, that in other countries—has a clean bill of health.

We shall have to wait until after the next war to get at the facts. Until then nothing will appear to suggest that, in a general way, the munition makers do not act like gentlemen. They are all for peace, even though, as their leader explained, they do not think that war is the worst of evils; and they do nothing of which the British government does not approve. What is specialy moving is their anxiety that this country should always have arms proportionate to the problems it confronts; the expensive research they under-

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Merchants of Death by Mabel Dwight

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take is to insure that this shall be the case. Their patriotism is beyond suspicion, and any tendency to internationalism they may display is always limited by their acceptance of the license system imposed by the Board of Trade. They are, in short, a band of angels, almost careless of profit, who happen to traffic in dangerous materials. They sell their commodity just like other trades, but they are far more limited than other trades in the freedom they enjoy. That is the picture they paint of themselves, and in a general way I do not doubt that they believe it. I do not doubt, either, that the majority of the commission, when it reports, will believe it too.

THE RIDDLE OF THE SUPREME COURT

Where Does the Supreme Court Stand?

BY MAX LERNER

WHERE does the Supreme Court stand in this year of grace 1936, after exactly three years of the Roosevelt Administration? The headlong rush of the New Deal down the steep decline that leads to the judicial lethal chamber has for the time been interrupted by the TVA decision. The new role of the court seems mystifying and even a bit capricious to both sides. Wendell L. Willkie and his cohorts of public-utility executives seem dazed, like someone suffering from the trauma of a harrowing experience. It seems unaccountable and even a bit ungrateful for the Supreme Court, which they have been so warmly defending, to turn against its defenders. And the liberals, unaccustomed to such judicial tolerance, quite naturally smell a rat. While their joy over the continuance of the TVA, which has always been their fondest experiment in social planning, abates their zeal against the court, they dare not lap themselves in too deep a security about the future. They know that every Monday during the Supreme Court term the Constitution is refashioned.

This may be dramatic, but it is the worst possible psychological medium within which to carry on the business of state and the government of industry. It is the worst possible medium in which to attempt some sort of mastery over our economic drift. One of the arguments that has always been advanced to justify the judicial power is that it stabilizes the conditions under which American business enterprise is carried on and gives a certainty to the law. But this becomes very questionable in the light of the recent gyrations of the court. Neither the public-utility executives nor the social planners feel any certainty at all, any more than do the farmers or the workers or the holding-company executives. The Supreme Court is in a real sense an unsettling force in American life.

I do not mean to underestimate the importance of the TVA decision, and especially of the basic economic issues that were implicit in the case, although not passed upon by the court. Those issues went to the core of collective control of natural resources, and there are few issues more important than that today. But the irony of the situation is that the very importance of the issues was adequate reason for not raising them. An amazing amount of skill was expended in the government brief and in the oral argument of government counsel to prove that nothing very much was involved and that the case was no great shakes after all. And wisely so, for in legal terms it would have been suicide for the government to admit the social implications of the TVA program. Government counsel insisted on shutting their eyes to them. Chief Justice Hughes agreed, and said that all he could see was a specific contract and a specific case. Justice Brandeis went farther and insisted that try as hard as he would, he could not even see a case. Only James Beck and Forney Johnston and Wendell Willkie and other public-utility lawyers and executives had eyesight of undiminished sharpness. And Justice McReynolds saw with them. The implications of the TVA experiment haunted them like a nightmare. They even saw in what Mr. Lilienthal and his colleagues were doing in the Tennessee Valley a complete revolution in government.

The judicial fate of the remaining New Deal legislation is far from settled by the recent decision. If the liberals hope that the court is moving toward a broad construction of social legislation they are doing some wishful thinking. A single TVA swallow does not make a New Deal summer. What happens to the Guffey Coal Act, the Labor Relations Board, the Securities Exchange Commission, and the Social Security Act will turn on constitutional issues which either did not come up before the court in the TVA case or were deliberately avoided in the decision. Prediction is therefore difficult, especially in the light of the almost unbelievable about-face from the drastic Hoosac decision to the tolerant TVA decision.

Nevertheless, the abyss between the two decisions can be bridged, although the span that is thrown across is not a strictly constitutional span but one that depends chiefly on the logic of social realities. Quite aside from the fact that the Wilson Dam had been built through powers specifically granted to Congress, whereas the AAA involved more indefinite, implied powers; and aside also from the fact that the court saw it might look foolish seeking to undo what had already become a part of nature, there is the more elusive question of the social role of the

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court. When it invalidated the AAA program, which, whatever the benefits to the farmers themselves, was generally regarded as a plowing under of material resources and a form of social waste, it could pose as being on the side of the angels. But there was no social waste involved in the TVA program. On the contrary, its chief danger to the vested interests lay in the fact that it was a planned development and use of natural resources at the lowest cost for the consumer. If the court had dared decree against it, the judges would have found themselves this time on the side of social waste.

Thus even in the erratic course of the court's decisions some sort of logic can be traced, although it is not the logic that the judges give so much as the one that gives them away. In the light of such a non-constitutional logic how do the future decisions on the New Deal loom up? Failing a drastic change in the composition of the court, we may count upon the continued hostility of the majority of the judges to the social purposes, the economic premises, and the political personnel of the New Deal. That means that unless they are forced into a tolerant attitude by a growing popular feeling against the court or by some compulsion of the facts themselves, as in the TVA case, they are likely to construe every possible constitutional doubt against the government.

The constitutional doubts will turn on three questions which have thus far only partially been settled by the court. Two of them—the commerce power of Congress and its taxing and spending power—I have already discussed in the second article of this series. The commerce power, while it took a serious setback from the court in the Railroad Retirement and Schechter cases, is not yet beyond redemption. Moreover, the taxing power under the general-welfare clause, and the Congressional power of making appropriations are—given a favorable court—in a better position than the commerce power. Even the Hoosac decision did not actually decide the general-welfare clause out of existence. One of the impressive things about Justice Stone's dissent was the way in which he underscored the fact that the majority had made no actual *decision* about the taxing power. There was to be no doubt about that going on the record. The taxing power may still be rescued—given willing rescuers.

The third important constitutional issue, which might have been discussed in the Hoosac decision but was not, is that of the delegation of powers. To what extent can Congress delegate its powers to the Executive and to the administrative agencies working with the Executive? Although it cropped up sporadically, this did not become a basic judicial issue until the New Deal. In the Panama Hot Oil case the court for the first time in its history, with Justice Cardozo as the sole dissenter, decided that Congress had gone beyond its proper scope in delegating its powers to Secretary Ickes as oil administrator, and accordingly it threw that portion of the National Recovery Act out of the window. The court unanimously threw out the rest of the act after it in the Schechter decision, on the same issue of delegation as applied to the code authorities. A good part of the briefs in the Hoosac case were devoted to the issue of the delegation of arbitrary power to the Secretary of Agriculture, but the court did not consider the issue. It will crop up again prominently in passing on the power given to the Securities Exchange Commission in the administration of the Public Utility Holding Company Act. The basic questions that are always raised about delegation of power are whether Congress has given the agency so broad a discretion as to amount to legislative powers in itself and whether it has set up standards clear enough so that the agency can carry out the legislative will without making arbitrary decisions.

It is an interesting query as to why the Supreme Court has seen fit to revive the slumbering doctrine of delegation of powers just in this period of crisis. Perhaps the justices had grown to identify a concentration of power in the Executive with the threat of fascism. Perhaps some of them were more sharply influenced by a jealous concern for their own right to apportion powers among the departments of the government. Or perhaps both reasons operated to rationalize a deeper antipathy to the legislation in question. The convenience of the doctrine from the standpoint of the judicial veto is that thereby an act can be invalidated because of its administrative features even when the power exercised is within the scope of Congress.

The important legislation soon to come before the court falls roughly into four or five groups. The first deals with the remaining cases that concern the generation and marketing of power. Undoubtedly new cases will be brought to the court involving aspects of the TVA that have not yet been settled, but there is every reason to believe that the court will apply to the other dams the logic of the TVA. The only point at which the court is likely to limit the TVA program would be when the government sought to extend its activities in serious competition with the existing utilities. Since the attempts of the rural-electrification program to bring electric power to rural communities would not seriously damage the existing vested interests, there is a chance of their validation. The right of the Federal Power Commission to supervise the accounts and rates of companies leasing government dam-sites seems clearly constitutional as a consequence of the government's right to dispose of its property. There remains the problem of whether the PWA can constitutionally make loans to the municipalities for building their own power plants. The Circuit Court decision in favor of the government in the Duke Power Company case seems clear enough for the Supreme Court to follow.

In an uncertain world nothing seems more certain than that the Guffey Coal Act will be declared unconstitutional. This case will bring to judicial attention the attempt to cartelize a chaotic industry in which the interests of operators, workers, and consumers have been jeopardized by the maddest sort of cutthroat competition. The constitutional issues involved are those of the commerce power and the taxing power. There is no need for the court to rule that the mining of coal like the selling of chickens is not an interstate concern, but there is considerable likelihood that it will do so. For if the crucial character of the coal industry in the national economy and the consequent need for industrial peace in it gives the industry an inter-

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state character the same might be held to apply later to steel, oil, rubber, automobiles, and other mining industries. And the court has in the past shown itself extremely sensitive to fears about the ultimate consequences of its decisions—what Professor Powell has termed "the parade of the imaginary horribles." But an even more serious defect in the Guffey Act relates to its rather crude use of the device of the prohibitive tax as in the child-labor tax case.

The fate of the Wagner-Connery Act will concern labor. That also turns upon the commerce power. Despite the great solicitude with which the act limits the scope of the National Labor Relations Board to those problems of collective bargaining which concern industries engaged in interstate commerce, and despite the Congressional finding that strikes resulting from lack of collective bargaining "have the intent or the necessary effect of burdening or obstructing commerce," it is doubtful whether the court will pay much heed either to a Congressional declaration of intention or to a Congressional finding of fact. This case would turn upon the "odd man" in the court, and there is little reason to believe that Justice Roberts, in the light of his recent record with respect to the federal power, would see fit to validate its power to establish collective bargaining. Of equally great moment to labor throughout the country is the fate of the Social Security Act. Two devices are used here—that of federal aid to states and that of the tax-credit scheme in the pay-roll tax for those states which provide adequate plans for unemployment insurance. The first would seem to be clearly constitutional under the federal power of appropriation. The second is more doubtful, and while it is a much more ingenious device than the tax scheme in the Guffey Act, it is not beyond the possibility of judicial veto. Its great strength is its similarity to the tax-credit feature of the federal estates tax: in form at least it may be construed as a method for avoiding double taxation rather than as a false-face for federal regulation. The chances are that the widespread labor unrest which would follow a veto of the social-security measures might be a consideration helping to turn the court toward a favorable attitude.

Finally, there is the problem of the Public Utility Holding Company Act. This involves both the commerce power and the delegation of powers. The struggle over it, as well as over the Securities Exchange Commission as a whole, will undoubtedly evoke the deepest tensions in our economic life. In these cases the known abuses of the holding-company device may be so flagrant and so persuasive as to cause the court to follow the more liberal tradition of interpreting the commerce act. This depends, however, entirely on the temper of the court. Whether it will hold that financial organization is something that transcends state lines will probably depend not so much on constitutional doctrine as on whether the judges are more responsive to the interests of the holding companies themselves or to the popular feeling against such a concentration of financial power. As regards the issue of delegation of powers, the court will have to settle whether arbitrary power has been delegated by Congress to the Securities Exchange Commission. Even the holding-company executives agree privately that immense talent was shown in the legislative drafting of the act. Moreover, the government contends that, given the amazing intricacy and refinements of holding-company finance, the standards Congress has set up for the commission are almost over-rigid.

Beyond the question of whether the New Deal is constitutional is the more far-reaching question: Is a controlled economy constitutional? I think it is clear that any system of genuine economic control would have to give Congress power over transportation and communications, the basic heavy industries, giant power, agriculture, corporation and holding-company finance, and finally currency and banking. This is a good deal to ask but thus far there is no indication that anything less drastic has a chance of success. Such control can be accomplished through a variety of procedures and expedients, including the government-owned corporation, the mixed corporation with government members, the device of federal incorporation, and commission control. Whatever the form, control has to extend to the important sectors along the economic battle-front, and it has to involve basic decisions on prices, wages, production, and social security. The very statement of the problem is a sufficient answer in the light of our analysis of the pending legislation.

In addition to the inherent difficulties of planning in a capitalist system, the court is the final obstacle. Thus far the forces which have sought to obstruct the shaping of adequate controls over our economy have worked largely through the medium of so-called constitutional law. Thus all our talk about an economy of abundance is futile in the face of the *cordon sanitaire* which the court has flung around us. For the immediate future at least we must conclude that a controlled economy is not constitutional.

The court has often been defended even by those who admit its economic bias as a guardian of civil liberties and a bulwark against fascism. This is the liberal counterpart of the conservative view which sees the court as the most stable force in our political system—something tough and enduring, something to oppose to the frivolous and the temporary and the passionate, something that is in the deepest sense part of our traditional pattern. But if the problem is one of finding social stability, it should be pointed out that the judicial power introduces a reckless and incalculable element into our governmental system and leaves the entire economic structure at the mercy of the judges' will. If the question is one not of stability but of freedom, the case is just as clear against the judicial power. If fascism ever dangerously threatens America, it will be not because of too strong an Executive but because of the economic chaos due to lack of planning, and because of a conviction on the part of the owning groups that they can hold on only by fascist techniques to a power that is slipping from them. A court that has been responsive throughout its history to the needs of business enterprise would scarcely cease to be so in a fascist crisis. If fascism ever comes that close, then heaven help us if we have to depend upon the court to ward it off.

[*This is the third article in Mr. Lerner's series. The first two appeared in the issues of January 29 and February 19. The last article will appear two weeks hence.*]

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A Note on Literary Criticism

BY JAMES T. FARRELL

LITERATURE is to be viewed both as a branch of the fine arts and as an instrument of social influence. As a consequence there arises a duality which produces unresolved problems in literary criticism. For purposes of understanding and convenience we may divide human experience into two general categories, the aesthetic and the functional. The aesthetic aspect of human experience is revealed in the pleasure or the elation which we derive from things, from qualities, and from intellectual, emotional, or physiological states for their own sake. Experience in its functional aspect is concerned with objects and actions in terms of their use values. I use the phrase "aspects of experience" because I do not wish to establish a polarization of categories. Any complete divorcement of categories leads to over-simplification—and both in the practice and the theory of aesthetics and of literary criticism we have seen all too clearly the confusion growing out of such divisions and simplifications.

Generally speaking, aesthetic experience is a by-product of functional activity. Thus happiness and pleasure are the by-products of action and living. Pure aestheticism, however, reverses this relationship, and by making aesthetic satisfaction a primary consideration tends to detach it from the functional activities which generate it. Because of the sterility of this view and the extremism with which it has been advocated, the theory of art for art's sake has merited most of its present disrepute. Nevertheless, criticism of this point of view has also been carried to unnecessary extremes. The result has been a slurring over or an ignoring of the genuine problems of aesthetics; and at the same time criticism has developed a tendency to derogate aesthetic sensibilities.

One form of functional extremism is that of the Catholics who demand that literature and aesthetics become the handmaiden of Catholic theology, Catholic moral codes, and, recently, of Catholic Action. On the opposite side of the political fence is a group which indulges in a functional extremism of another but equally grievous sort. In this group are to be found the revolutionary critics who may be described as "leftist."

The Marxist approach to literature is largely genetic. Basically, it is a highly revealing method of probing into backgrounds, and of indicating the social origins and ideological relationships between the content and material of a literary work and the society which it springs from. Various Marxists, however, in pushing forward and interpreting the meaning of such slogans as "Literature is a weapon in the class struggle," and "All art is propaganda," have been guilty of the type of functional extremism to which I have referred. One of the results has been to give substance to the notion that such slogans exhaustively describe the role and define the functions of literature. As for the obstacles which invariably present themselves once this attitude is assumed in literary criticism, our revolutionary critics have for the most part overcome them by ignoring them or by minimizing their importance.

The nature of these obstacles can best be indicated by the manner in which the literature of the past is dealt with by the exponents of this brand of criticism. One young revolutionary writer declared in a speech that Shakespeare was a propagandist, citing as "proof" of this statement that Shakespeare defended British imperialism. Are we to understand from this that plays like "Macbeth" and "Hamlet" are, like the Singapore naval base, part of the defenses of the British Empire? And must we therefore discard the idea, deeply held through many centuries, that "Macbeth" continues to be relevant and "useful" because it is a profound dramatization of the phenomenon of the human ambition for power and glory, or that, similarly, "Hamlet" has value for us because it is a moving dramatic representation of man's disillusionment and indecision?

At this point it might even be worth while to consider a phenomenon which is well known except perhaps to the young revolutionary writer who discovered that Shakespeare was a propagandist. This is the phenomenon of recurrence in human experience. Even our critic of Shakespeare would admit that there is a recurrence in the experience of Occidental man. There are men among us today, glutted with the power characteristic of this stage of the world's development, who have felt as Macbeth felt when his cards were trumped; men of the present generation have experienced emotions similar to those to which Hamlet gave perhaps the most superb expression. Surely one of the values of these two plays is that they manage to express in dramatic and timeless language emotional experience which is recurrent in the life of Western man. And these values would still persist even if it could be proved that Shakespeare was an imperial propagandist.

In the same way Dickens has been cited as an illustration of the formula that all art is propaganda. Yet the truth is that the propagandist aspect of Dickens is not the aspect which interests us most. To discover Dickens the propagandist is not to exhaust the value of Dickens the artist. Today much of his propaganda is stale; we read him because we obtain from his books a sense of the life of his time. He created characters who exist in their own right; his work possesses also a pictorial quality, the result of his extraordinary talent for describing scenes and objects so vividly that we are aware of their contours and of their actual "feel." It is such qualities as these, which are

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indubitably aesthetic, that explain why Dickens still survives as a living imaginative force.

If these contentions be granted, a conclusion is suggested. Certain works of literature possess a value over and above their significance in relation to the material conditions and the actual society out of which they were created, a value which persists in time and in human experience. In other words, a work of art may have a relative objective validity.

How do these conclusions square with Marx and Marxism? We have explicit evidence that Marx recognized this aspect of art. In the final notes in his "A Critique of Political Economy" he wrote: "It is well known that certain periods of highest development in art stand in no direct connection with the general development of society, nor with the material basis and the skeleton structure of its organization." Marx then asks the question: Does Greek art not exert an eternal charm on us? And the mere fact that he asked this question indicates that Marx recognized that an objective validity may reside in a work of art. He goes on, in his note, to offer the suggestion that the Greeks were "normal children," that they represent the most nearly perfect development of the social childhood of mankind, and that just as individuals look back on a normal childhood with pleasure, so as a race we look back with enjoyment on the social childhood of the human race and the art that it produced. Yet it is apparent that our enjoyment of that art has no important direct and immediate value to us in the solution of the issues with which Marx, for instance, was primarily concerned. We, like Marx, derive an experience from the consideration and contemplation of Greek art and culture which is at least in part aesthetic. Greek art, in other words, has an objective validity which persists to the present day.

A further suggestion presents itself. There is a noticeable tendency for works of philosophy which are also works of art to retain only their aesthetic value in a succeeding era. Plato is a case in point. In previous periods Plato was a stronger intellectual force than he is today. He was a primary thinker who set the problems and tone of philosophical thought. Today he exerts influence not as a thinker and philosopher but as a poet and dramatist who used ideas rather than characters. The value of his work is largely aesthetic rather than functional; the dialogues are dramas of ideas rather than a body of working tools for the organization of knowledge and the changing of the world.

Proceeding, there are certain statements consistent with a Marxian hypothesis which can be usefully applied to artistic creation. The creation of art and literature is not an independent process taking place in a vacuum. This is a truism. It is another matter, however, to attempt to specify in any particular case the manner in which objective situations control and delimit thought. The relationship between end products in a society, such as art and thought, and the basic material relationships is not equal and even. It cannot be graphed in a straight line or expressed in a simple equation. To make such an attempt is to practice determinism of the sort which Engels drastically criticized in Feuerbach. For a writer to insist that economic factors have a direct, equal, and coordinate effect, and are an evenly casual factor in all situations, is to reduce the world to a most unrealistic simplicity. Neither Marx nor Engels permitted himself this easy intellectual luxury. When they stressed economic factors, it was not to exclude other factors that influence social ideals, culture, and art. Their writings must be taken in relation to their purposes and their times. German philosophers were concerned with such questions as "What is the basis of the universe?" Their answer was "spirit." Spirit meant an extra-experiential force; it was a new word for an old God, and by implication spirit was the motive force in the universe. Marx's materialism was a revolt from this doctrine; instead of indulging in metaphysical speculations or supernatural conclusions, he investigated the forces that operate in the material world. He discovered that a basic and preponderant force was economic relationships. Since he was writing at a time when philosophical dualism prevailed, it was necessary for him to underline his emphasis on economics. But this does not mean that he considered economics to be the sole factor. He conceived society as in the making, and he perceived that there is always present in social relationships the factor of change. The effects of one set of relationships therefore may well become the causes of the next set, and there is an ever-evolving network of influences. Hence cultural manifestations, such as formal thought, art, and literature, which are directly related to the basic material relationships upon which a society is founded in one era, depart from that set of relationships as the process unfolds in the passage of time, and in turn become causal factors in the general stream of social tendencies. Thus, for instance, the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas is today a social influence. So, too, is that of Spinoza. And just as the creative literature of past epochs has survived into the present, at least some of the art of the present may be expected to retain validity after the processes of history have washed aside or solved the problems created by the needs and the conditions of capitalist democracy.

What then becomes of the terms "bourgeois" and "proletarian" in their application to art and thought? With some critics and reviewers it has been sufficient to apply either of these terms to a work of literature in order to arrive at a judgment upon it. Others have attempted to analyze the differences between "bourgeois" literature and "proletarian" literature, and have predicted what proleterian literature would be, how some day it would develop proletarian Prousts greater than Proust.

And then shortly afterward they have treated their prophecies as if they were fact, and compared the "bourgeois" literature that has been produced with the "proletarian" literature that they hoped to see produced, as if both were actually existent. A more important task of critics and commentators is, it seems to me, to study proletarian literature in the present, to evaluate it, to perceive the manner in which it is influenced by bourgeois literature.

[*A continuation of this discussion by Mr. Farrell will appear next week.*]

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No Soap-Boxes in Hollywood

BY MORRIE RYSKIND

Hollywood, February 21]

THERE are two fair indictments to be brought against Hollywood: one is, to use the industry's favorite adjective, its colossal ignorance of current political happenings; the other is the shocking cowardice to be found in high places. What I hope to do in this article is explain the first of these, for which there is a reason; and to argue against the second, for which there is no reason at all.

Let me start by telling you there are no soap-boxes in Hollywood. That is a significant and dismaying fact to a born New Yorker, whose first wails do not interrupt the political argument between the doctor who is delivering him and the attending nurse; who grows up watching the crowd heckling the Socialist speaker at the corner; who, in his maturer years, can get a hot discussion on the merits of Tammany from his lawyer, his broker, his barber, and his wife. I do not contend, mind you, that any of this talk has any intrinsic merit, but I do contend that it is better than no talk at all.

Not—heaven knows!—that you can't get talk in Hollywood. Everybody can tell you what "Mutiny on the Bounty" did in its third week in New York; and anybody can tell you who is to be the new head of Paramount now that Lubitsch is out; further, if you're interested, everybody has a good tip on the races. Well, not a good tip exactly, but a tip. But, very definitely, Hollywood is not politically minded. Of current events it knows practically nothing. It knows that the Prince of Wales is now Edward VIII, and that Italy and Ethiopia are at war; that, however, about sums it up. Mention the California criminal-syndicalism act, the pending Tydings-McCormack disaffection bill, or the Kramer sedition bill (the latter introduced by California's own contribution to Washington), and you will get nothing but a blank look. Not even a dirty look—just plain blank. Once—this was before I had learned—I mentioned the Scottsboro case to my hostess, and she wanted to know who was playing in it.

Now there's an explanation for this, and it isn't the old, convenient bromide that Hollywood is made up of morons. I have met directors, writers, stars, supervisors, producers, and even song writers whose intelligence is not to be questioned. But they're in Hollywood. And Hollywood is essentially a summer resort—an all-year summer resort.

You know what happens in a summer resort. People check their thinking caps and go in for some fun. They relax. Everybody relaxes—even strict Marxians, I am reliably informed, relax at summer resorts. Walter Lippmann relaxes. The editors of *The Nation* relax—and a pretty sight it is, too, they tell me. Even Morris Ernst relaxes. If such people can't help relaxing, how can Hollywood avoid succumbing to its climate? Especially when it is compelled, against nature, to produce an enormous number of pictures for the public? From nine to five writers write against time, directors direct against time, producers produce against budgets. If you're a writer under contract to turn out six scripts a year, or a director who gets on the set at eight in the morning, or an actor who has to be made up by the same time, or a producer who has to worry about six pictures at once, you do not at the end of the working day rush to find out how the ship of state is faring. You go home and take a shower, you have a cocktail and eat your dinner, and you are ready for an evening of intensive relaxation.

The only chance you would have to get any news would be from the newspapers. But the newspapers here are small-time, summer-resort newspapers. There are three that are important—the two Hearst papers and the Los Angeles *Times*. I can describe their editorial policies only by telling you that, compared to them, the New York *Herald Tribune* is edited by Mike Gold, and the New York *Sun* by John Strachey. I find them invaluable when I decide to look at the stock market. For my daily news I get, three days late, the New York *Times* and *Herald Tribune*.

So, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, I hope I have made it clear to you why Hollywood is not politically minded.

I had another point. About the people who do read the news and therefore know what's going on. Ever so many of them will discuss things with you and then add, "Of course, you won't quote me." If you ask them to serve on a committee for a cause they profess to be devoutly interested in, they hastily beg off. They are afraid.

I am constantly amazed that people earning between $25,000 and $100,000 yearly can be afraid. I can understand the poor devil with just enough each day to pay for his meals and his roof being afraid for his job. The thing I cannot understand is cringing and cowardice from people who have enough and more than enough; but if ever I met a wage slave, it was not in the lodging-houses of the poorly paid but in the luxurious palaces of Beverly Hills.

And the pity of it is that their fear is so unnecessary. They are not only cowardly but stupid in their fear of a fascism that doesn't exist. Hollywood is so unpolitically minded that the boss doesn't give a damn what you think as long as you do your work. If Irving Thalberg ever fires Groucho Marx, it won't be because Groucho subscribes to *The Nation*, but because that next picture isn't a money-maker.

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Issues and Men

BY OSWALD GARRISON VILLARD

THE latest news from Germany proves that there is to be no let-up in the torture of the Jews, whatever the soft-pedaling of their persecutors for the moment because of the Olympic games. Fortunately, the killing of the Nazi propaganda chief in Switzerland, Wilhelm Gustloff, by a young Jew has not as yet had the serious effects at first feared; these may come later. But if this incident is not exploited to the full, other things will be; it is the easiest thing in the world to stage an "atrocity." Meanwhile the mental and spiritual and physical degradation of the Jews goes on. The publication of the vile and obscene *Stürmer* and its posting in the most conspicuous places offer positive proof of the willingness of Hitler to have his government identified with a persecution which for calculated brutality and fiendishness surpasses anything in modern history—the pogroms of the Czar were more merciful since they usually killed outright or maimed and then passed by.

The cowardice of the Hitler policy is beyond words. I have already pointed out that the whole persecution is a confession of the superior ability of the German Jews. There were never more than 625,000 Jews in Germany, and if from these the sick, the paupers, the imprisoned, the aged, and the children are excluded, there certainly cannot remain more than 450,000 able-bodied adults, men and women; yet Hitler would have us believe that these 450,000 led his "great and heroic" people by the nose, degraded their literature, befouled their public life, made the World War, made the treaty of peace, stabbed the army in the back, and were responsible for every ill which Germany has encountered. That all this is the gravest reflection on the German nation Hitler and his associates cannot see. And now he declares that the last Jew must be driven out of Germany because the Germans are so susceptible to the poisoned virus of the Jew that Germany will not be safe from cultural and moral degradation as long as one of the race remains on German soil! Was there ever anything so preposterous? Hitler and his associates declare that they are the reincarnation of the legendary German heroes. If they were they would certainly never take advantage of their overwhelming power to abuse and maltreat and degrade a small minority group among 62,000,000 people, a group which cannot strike back, cannot defend itself, and is gradually being reduced to the point where its members cannot even earn a decent living as they are excluded from all the professions, from the trades, and from the labor unions.

To me this is so dreadful a happening that if all the rest of the Hitler regime commended itself to sane and liberal men, I should never for a moment forgive it. The poisoning of the lives of the Jewish children is not the gravest count in the indictment. Even worse is the poisoning of the souls of the rest of the German youth by the inculcation of hatred, prejudice, and sadistic cruelty. What is the use of having Hitler youth movements to teach the German youth manliness, consideration for others, kindliness, and nobility of mind and conduct? All that is offset by telling these children that there is at least one group in the community upon which they can wreak their wills as sadistically as they please, to be applauded therefor by everybody from the *Führer* down. Of course the Jews are not the only group that is beyond the pale. The Communists, too, are fair game for anybody who wishes to denounce them or attack them. Only they are not so clearly marked a group. It isn't so easy to single them out and to stick barbs into their souls and bodies. One can't get from them the same exquisite pleasure as from watching a child wince while one makes him acquainted with the fact that he is the scum of the earth, that his blood is tainted, and that his touch defiles everybody with whom he comes in contact.

Well, I hear it asked, what is the use of rehearsing this horror? The use is that as long as these things go on there must be protests against them if we are to keep our self-respect. If there is no criticism, these horrors will spread; they are already well under way in Poland. More than that, we are getting reflexes in the United States. I know that Archibald MacLeish has written encouragingly in *Fortune* about the American situation; still there are plenty of signs of underhand and insidious propaganda. I have on my desk a pamphlet, widely circulated here, which solemnly asserts that the blood of the Jew turns yellow when it is spilled—curious that that phenomenon wasn't noticed in the World War. I confess my dismay that there is so little indignant reaction to the growing anti-Semitism here. It makes me want to get out on the street corner on a soap-box and beg my fellow-countrymen to realize that to go on with this sort of thing will pollute and befoul their souls.

Perhaps when I use such words as "pollute" and "befoul" I shall be charged with writing immoderately. I had an ancestor who was denounced for using violent language about human slavery and advised to be less severe. He replied: "On this subject I do not wish to think, or speak, or write with moderation. No! no! Tell a man whose house is on fire to give a moderate alarm; tell him to moderately rescue his wife from the hands of the ravisher; tell the mother to gradually extricate her babe from the fire into which it has fallen; but urge me not to use moderation in a cause like the present." I echo these words when it comes to the persecution of any group and today, especially, the Jews.

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BROUN'S PAGE

THEY held a Congress of Artists in New York a few days ago and it started with a lot of speeches in Town Hall. I made one of them. Of course, I got into an Artists' Congress merely as a fellow-traveler. They told me to talk about the possibility of painters coming together along trade-union lines.

Now the detail of that might present many difficulties, and yet it seems to me that art in America must go left or continue to stand and dwindle resolutely in the same spot. This is said all the more sincerely because it is in part an apology. I wrote a column in a newspaper announcing in that dogmatic way which newspaper columnists assume that there had never been a painter of any consequence in America, and that in all probability there never would be.

It just doesn't seem to be a natural form of expression north of the Rio Grande. But once you get into Mexico you see some old Indian who never took a lesson in his life or read a single article by Royal Cortissoz hammering away at silver and sticking in turquoise at appropriate places in a most magnificent manner. Even when the blanket he wants to sell you is a fake, he had at least the artistic sense to buy the best the chain store had to offer. And once you get to a Mexican public building which has a blank wall to offer, you will find a dozen masters struggling to express themselves in color. There are at least three Mexican painters who do not need to doff their hats to any of the dead.

But I am informed, and probably correctly, that this surge of form and color across the border is not justly attributed to native genius alone. It is a response, an artistic liberation, which comes out of the very economic fermentation of Mexico. The worker has begun to get some sense of his own world beneath his feet. And so it would be here, once the ice jam broke. One log leaps free and the rest begin to dance.

Yes, I think that's true because painting has been fed in America upon a wine which is rare and also watery. The vintage is called taste. It has been accepted as valuable merely because there has been so little of it. Sometimes it is accompanied by emotion, but mostly not. Mr. Morgan the elder used to buy old masters in wholesale lots. The younger head of the house seemed to have aesthetic yearnings when he was investigated in Washington. But they may have been lightly rooted. The reigning Mr. Morgan does not necessarily become a poet because he spoke of the color of the heather in Scotland. Nor should he be elevated to the ranks of critics on the mere strength of the fact that he has from time to time bought a picture.

It would be silly, I'll admit, to contend that all the products of what Upton Sinclair called "Mammon Art" are necessarily bad. Under the patronage of the church there did emerge some men of genius. But even the church had a much broader base than a little group of private collectors. The successful sculptor or painter today must land one or two big fish or perish. And if he does land them he will probably perish spiritually in any case. Nobody can do a good job if he carries constantly with him the idea, "This must be the sort of picture that Mrs. Beamish likes or Junior won't be able to get to college next year."

I am aware that there are portrait painters who pretend a great arrogance to their prospective sitters. They will boast of the manner in which they turned down a commission or left a job in the middle because the lady of the house endeavored to get hoity-toity. Such things have happened, but they are not the rule. When a successful painter takes up his kit of tools and goes home in a high dudgeon it is not the tallest tower which he quits but one of the lesser mansions standing well below the great white house on the hill.

If we are to have better painters we must have better audiences and much bigger ones. There will have to be a contact between those capable of feeling excitement and those capable of creating it. To be specific, I think it would be an excellent idea if the United Mine Workers of America gave a prize at their convention two years hence for the best painting of a mine or miners. The prize could be any kind of laurel you please. I honestly think that sort of award might well be the proudest possession a painter could win.

It may be argued that as a rule trade-union members have not had the chance to study art forms, and that they wouldn't be interested. The study of art forms does not seem to me a necessary background, and whenever you get seventeen hundred up-and-coming men gathered together you have a reservoir of emotion which makes the taste of one or two connoisseurs seem pretty fragile. A roar of welcome from seventeen hundred workers ought to put more energy back into the marrow of any painter than a well-modulated "interesting color" dropped over his right shoulder.

Painting must be about something. It must be done by people who are hot and burning and very much bothered. You can't get art from contented cows, and you can't even give it to an equally bovine audience. Of course the same thing is true of writing and acting. No theater of any consequence can be built upon audiences which don't care much one way or the other about anything. Naturally I am not contending that everything which goes under the name of "proletarian art" is good. Some of it is terrible. But it is the beginning of wisdom. Even in the lesser crafts this is true. I'm getting a little bit tired of having people say to me, "You do your best columns when you're mad." The answer is, "Who doesn't?" In a burning world anybody who has any pretensions to any kind of artistic expression must make his choice. He can be either a fireman or a fiddler.

HEYWOOD BROUN

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ON THE DIFFICULTY OF MODERN POETRY

BY JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH

MODERN poetry is difficult. The fact is sometimes denied by our poets themselves and by critics or readers who have specialized in the idioms and methods of contemporary verse, but it is pretty generally accepted by the vast majority of those who devour novels and plays, so that the audience of many poets well known to their fellows is limited to a group too small to exhaust an edition of five hundred copies.

It is true that several notable exceptions spring immediately to mind. Mrs. Wylie, Miss Millay, Mr. Robinson, and Mr. Frost are not, in any special sense, difficult poets. If they must sometimes be read with an intensity of attention greater than is ordinarily required by either narrative or expository prose, they are not different in this respect from at least a considerable number of the poets of the past who were commonly called great. On the other hand, there certainly is a very special sense in which many of their contemporaries are difficult, and anyone who doubts the fact may read the critical reviews published, for example, in *The Nation* itself.

By way of illustration I will choose almost at random "Theory of Flight" by Muriel Rukeyser, which Philip Blair Rice reviewed in our issue for January 29. There he called the work "one of those rare first volumes which impress by their achievement more than by their promise," and after complaining that not all of the author's metaphors were "chromium clear," he cited as "about as pure and as poetical as any lines being written today":

> Never forget in legendary darkness
> the ways of the hands' turning and the mouth's ways,
> wander in the fields of change and not remember
> a voice and many voices and the evening's burning.

If anyone be inclined to remark that to find any difficulty in this strophe—deliberately chosen as conspicuously well realized—is to confess illiteracy, let him turn to another review by the same critic in the issue for February 19. In this, after praising Robert Fitzgerald for "a technique that is not equaled in subtlety and polish by any other of our younger poets," he remarks that "it was not until about the twelfth reading that I thought I was able to understand the poem beginning 'Death under the fingernails is unreal,'" and adds—with what may seem to some excessive mildness—"the false scents which I followed still interfere with my enjoyment of the poem."

For the moment I am not concerned with the possible justification for difficulties of this sort, but only with two facts—first, that the difficulties exist; and, second, that in many quarters they are taken for granted as inevitable from the very nature of poetry itself. Yet if this attitude is justifiable, it must at least be admitted that the inevitability is one which has developed within a generation, since the whole corpus of English poetry does not contain 1 per cent of lines anything like so difficult in any comparable manner. It is true that Donne and his fellow "metaphysical poets" afford the closest parallel. It is also true that some of the Jacobean dramatists have their crabbed passages. But even they are seldom so involved or so elliptic; and it is hardly necessary to insist that what was once accepted as the major tradition of English poetry from Chaucer to Swinburne is almost continuously and easily comprehensible on at least *one level of its meaning*. Shakespeare wrote one "difficult" poem, "The Phoenix and the Turtle," which, I seem to remember, Mr. Eliot called his best work. But whatever perplexities Shakespeare's sonnets may afford are usually due simply to personal references which we have lost, and nine-tenths of what he wrote is, like nine-tenths of what the other great English poets wrote, very easily comprehensible so far as *the surface aspects* of what he is saying are concerned.

It may be perfectly true that these surface aspects have little to do with his real greatness. Both the soul of his meaning and the soul of his poetic feeling may be quite as difficult to reach as those in the lines which Mr. Rice was compelled to read twelve times. But if this is true, then the fact certainly reveals a fundamental difference between his method and the method of the modern poets. His esoteric meaning is derived in conjunction with an exoteric one and runs parallel with it. From the very beginning and with the greatest ease one understands *something;* and from this easy beginning one is led on to penetrate as deeply as one can into the hidden beauties of thought or to appreciate as fully as one is able the subtleties of the expression.

And what is true of Shakespeare is true of most of the great English poets. When one fails to comprehend them, it is for a reason exactly opposite to the reason why one often fails to comprehend certain modern poets. In the latter case one simply fails to penetrate the tangled web of words, which produce no effect beyond that of an incantation; in the former one fails to understand because one has understood too readily a surface statement—understood, that is to say, only what the grammar-school pupil understands when he translates Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" into prose for purposes of an examination paper. Yet the fact remains that, fortunately or unfortunately, the vast majority of great English poems are built upon a framework of clear statement which can be reduced to prose, while many of the most characteristic modern poems are so written that only after the greatest effort would it be possible to say in this simple sense " what they are about."

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And it is for this reason that the failure of many modern readers to "understand" modern poetry is different from and more absolute than the failure of many persons in the past to "understand" their poets. It is perfectly true that Wordsworth was long unappreciated and in some sense not understood by the majority of readers. But that does not mean that they did not understand, on the surface, what he was saying. It means that they failed to understand why he was saying it, or that they failed to understand the nature of the emotion with which the saying was invested. Yet the bitterest of Wordsworth's detractors understood him in a sense in which even Mr. Rice found it difficult to understand certain of Mr. Fitzgerald's lines, and in which many, many readers fail to understand a whole conspicuous school of modern poets. For one thing, the syntax was simple. So also were his descriptions of the local habitations and names which he was giving to his ideas and emotions.

I am not unaware that the tendency to avoid what I have called a prose framework is both deliberate and based upon certain aesthetic convictions. The modern poet has set himself desperately against the palpably erroneous idea that a poem can be translated into prose, or even that what it is, in the truest sense, "about" can be stated in any form other than that of the poem itself. "Rose is a rose is a rose." A poem means the poem. To state that meaning in any other way is to violate it. And recognizing this fact, he is loath to employ as a framework anything which could be stated with even illusory clarity in prose. He wants his poetry to be pure in the sense that it is nothing but poetry, and he would, I suppose, insist that, let me say, the "Ode to a Grecian Urn" is impure just to the extent that a prose statement apparently stating the subject matter can easily be extracted from it.

Certainly I should not want to deny his fundamental premise. When one has said that the "Ode to a Grecian Urn" is about a man who saw an ancient urn carved with certain figures and who was led to feel that these carved figures were more enviable than human beings because they would always exist in this moment of grace and ecstasy, one has said little which gives a clue to the significance of the poem so far as the qualities which made it a poem are concerned. And yet I am not entirely convinced that the presence of the easily comprehensible prose framework serves no useful purpose, or that most of the great poets of the past were unwise to write their poetry around a prose core to which the reader could cling and about which he could orient himself. It is easier, as it were, to "take off" with him if one knows to begin with what he is "taking off" from.

The situation is not unlike that in which many modern painters have found themselves. Looking at a Renaissance painting they have no difficulty in pointing out that its beauty lies not in the realistic representation of the Holy Family, but in the fact that certain masses and certain colors are placed in certain two-dimensional patterns and certain plastic arrangements. By this discovery they are tempted to create pictures which are merely abstract arrangements of color and form. But the question is at least open whether or not these abstract arrangements are really as readily comprehensible and richly satisfying as the work of the Renaissance master; whether or not the greatest painter is not one who succeeds in achieving a representation while, at the same time, he manages to achieve also, within the limitations which representation sets, the abstract pattern.

I realize of course that there are other reasons for the difficulty of modern poetry. It is sometimes said, for example, that our sensibility is of a sort which demands more intricate expression. It may also be true that our poets, like our abstract painters, are struggling with problems of meaning so difficult to express that they do not dare complicate the problem by any effort to meet two different demands. But I cannot but suspect that when specifically modern poetry—if there is such a thing—actually achieves classical expression, it will be in forms which are difficult only in the sense that most poetry has always been difficult.

Speech to the Detractors

BY ARCHIBALD MACLEISH

What should a man do but love excellence
Whether of earth or art
Whether the hare's leap or the heart's recklessness?

What honor has any man but with eagerness
Valuing wasteless things
To praise the great and speak the unpraise meagerly?

Because the heroes with the swords have vanished
Leaving us nearer by
Actual life and the more human manhood—

Because the common face: the anonymous figure:
The nameless and mortal man:
Is our time's birth to bear and to be big with—

Because the captains and the kings are dust—
Need we deny our hearts
Their natural duty and the thing they *must* do?

Not to the wearers of wreaths but those who bring
them
Coming with heaped-up arms
Is fame the noble and ennobling thing.

Bequeathers of praise the unnamed numberless peoples
Leave on the lasting earth
Not fame but their hearts' love of fame for keeping

They raise not alone memorial monuments:
Outlasting these
They raise their need to give the great-one honor.

The ignorant and rabble rain erasing
Dates and the dead man's kind
Still leaves the blindness of the stones that praised him.

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Why then must this time of ours be envious?
Why must the great man now
Sealed from the mouths of worms be sucked by men's mouths?

Refusing ribbons that the rest have clowned for—
Dying and wishing peace—
The best are eaten by the envy round them.

When Lawrence died the hate was at his bier.
Fearing there might have lived
A man really noble; really superior—

Fearing that worth had lived and had been modest—
Men of envious minds
Ate with venom his new buried body.

We cheat ourselves in cheating worth of wonder.
Not the unwitting dead
But we who leave their praise unsaid are plundered.

BOOKS

Europe as Portraiture

INSIDE EUROPE. By John Gunther. Harper and Brothers. $3.50.

THIS is the day of the foreign correspondents. Not alone as experts in an infinitely complex subject but as interesting persons in their own right they now occupy a special row of seats on the literary platform. Vincent Sheean, Walter Duranty, and Negley Farson win acclaim with autobiographies, and Edgar Mowrer, H. R. Knickerbocker, Dorothy Thompson, Paul Scott Mowrer (though since he became editor, without title, of the Chicago *Daily News* he has slipped into the background), and John Gunther have national status. It is one of the minor signs that the United States is growing up. I remember back to 1913 and 1914 when Paul Mowrer in Paris and I in Berlin kept writing mail articles for the Chicago *Daily News* predicting the coming war—judgments of this nature could not be cabled in those days—and Charles H. Dennis, our editor, threw them into the wastebasket in the belief that his "young men" in Europe had lost their balance and were converted to foolishness. Knickerbocker and Dorothy Thompson were in the now defunct foreign service of the Philadelphia *Public Ledger;* the Mowrer brothers, Gunther, and Farson were with the Chicago *Daily News.* With the exception of Duranty, none of those mentioned became nationally known through their daily journalism. They had to make their reputations through magazine writing or books.

The richness of the experience of the foreign correspondent is revealed in John Gunther's closely packed volume, as is also his tingling talent. There is not a dull patch in it, because he himself detests the dull considerations. His approach to events is excited. What captures his interest is people, and the incidents that throw light on prominent men. By all odds this is the best way to make Europe come alive in an account of it. Here is a comprehensive, highly instructive work about contemporary Europe, made vivid and breath-taking by John Gunther's predilection for explaining events in terms of personalities. To be sure it is not quite satisfactory as history. Certain dramas in Europe, like the overthrow of Sir Samuel Hoare —which occurred too late, I assume, to be handled adequately —and even the Nazi revolution in Germany, are not to be understood in the language of political leadership alone. Particularly the Nazi revolution is a deeper movement than the bizarre and revolting incidents it throws up would indicate. But Mr. Gunther acknowledges in his preface that he is content to limit himself.

Mr. Gunther is a novelist. His "Red Pavilion," written before he became a foreign correspondent, showed his clear perception of characteristic externals and his felicity of direct communication, which now have come into full use in this volume. For this book is first of all a superb piece of communication. Mr. Gunther's vocabulary is rich, but he never throws the choice words around. He enters the mind of his reader using the direct, colloquial gusto of conversation. (Duranty, Dorothy Thompson, Knickerbocker, Gunther, and Farson are all great conversationalists, though the art is supposed to be dead.) Now and again Mr. Gunther's treatment carries him too far, as when he writes that Hitler has "an Oedipus complex as big as a house." Probably he doesn't care; he would rather be electric whatever the price in prosaic respectability.

The first value of this book is that persons who feel that they would like to catch up in their reading about Europe can inform themselves while experiencing rare delight. In other words, it is the best flower of journalism, what reporting ought to be, absorbing, revealing, alive. Furthermore, it is authentic. Mr. Gunther knows most of his people and situations at first hand and about the others he has assiduously informed himself. He writes without inhibitions, and tells what would be said in private conversation. He is anecdotal; he makes a point of including the little stories that go the rounds in Europe. The pattern of the book is a number of full-length portraits of the outstanding figures supplemented with thumbnail sketches of the lesser men. Between these are interspersed much germane material, such as admirable accounts of the June purge in Germany, the Reichstag fire, the death of Dollfuss. The best portraits are of Mussolini, Stalin, and Baldwin. I thought the portrait of Hitler, indeed of most of the Nazi leaders, less convincing. The material is there, every scrap of knowledge about Hitler is assembled; but the details do not fit into a whole. Gunther does not quite understand Hitler, not even with the help of psychoanalysis, and perhaps no one can. (He is mistaken in saying that Göring reintroduced the use of the ax in German executions; that ancient instrument has been used for many years and was not even abolished under the Weimar constitution.)

I was surprised by his roster of the "inner circle" of Britain. He lists Lord Dawson of Penn, a physician with more influence than is commonly known but hardly enough to warrant his inclusion. He also names Sir Maurice Hankey, who of course is there and invaluable, though not as a senior statesman, and he omits Lord Hailsham and Lord Salisbury, who certainly are more frequently consulted on grave matters of state than the other two. I should not have included Geoffrey Dawson, editor of the *Times,* and should have nominated Sir Josiah Stamp. His sketch of MacDonald is cruel, judging an entire life and contribution by the folly and failure of its last years, which no doubt reflects the current opinion in London. But even in such cruelty, and in the distinctly malicious sketches of the Nazis, he is both accurate and entertaining, while the more balanced portraits are convincingly creative. The vigor and almost impudent candor of this book mark it as distinctly American; that is, I cannot imagine a man of any other nationality writing it. It deserves a wide public.

RAYMOND GRAM SWING

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Necropolis

PREFACE TO THE PAST. By James Branch Cabell. Robert M. McBride and Company. $2.50.

CABELL'S name today calls back, rather than any particular books, a period in time and an attitude in thinking. For better or worse, we have arbitrarily set an end to the age preceding our own, which died equally of the depression and the rise to assertiveness of a new literary generation; and we cannot help regarding certain figures of the '20's as historically as we regard the Romantic poets or the Restoration dramatists. In expression and outlook these people seem set apart by a kind of "period" uniqueness, and their personalities seem no less dated than their philosophy. It is no more than a truism to assert that the generation of Cabell, Hergesheimer, Mencken, Rascoe, Boyd, Van Vechten, and Frances Newman, whatever its former importance may have been, is lacking now in influence and weight.

That generation had in one sense a difficult, but in another sense a miraculously easy, rise to success. In so far as it was "advanced," as it cut across the bias of orthodox American puritanism and provincialism, shocking the genteel, insulting the stupid, exposing the mediocre, it met with opposition from its elders and its inferiors. On the other hand, it was born into an era extremely favorable toward any talent at all. We were without good writers, hence unprejudiced as to what constituted good writing; we were liberated from the worst of our bondage to Mrs. Grundy by the war; were at the stage of wooing culture but of still having trouble with our French. The moment was ripe for self-conscious barbarians to go to school to self-conscious sophisticates. Cabell and his contemporaries came upon the scene, rapidly dominated it, and preached a flattering gospel—the gospel, in brief, of the civilized minority. We were invited to be, above everything else, mellow, aloof, urbane, and to believe in nothing but the comic senselessness of existence.

No group ever went harder to work to demonstrate, by a priori methods, that life was a pointless comedy. They were deeply pained, I think, every time they discovered dignity, merit, or reasonableness existing among their fellow-creatures. It upset their theory, it assaulted their ego; they wanted to show man up as foolish, pretentious, and incurably adolescent—someone who might be pitied but never admired except as he too imitated the laughter of the gods.

In their hands all this failed to be nourishing because it became less and less honestly skeptical and more and more gaudily cynical. In the end, far from showing the tender laughter of the eyes, they simply sneered, they simply cast out responsibility. ("I burn with generous indignation over this world's pigheadedness and injustice," said Cabell, "at no time whatever.") It was much less the nature of their philosophy than the frivolous way in which they practiced it that dated and disfigured their attitude. But it had also its ironical side, for while they were registering amusement over the pretensions of man, proud man, one got the feeling that Cabell came at one, willy-nilly, wearing the mantle of Montaigne, Boyd wearing the mantle of Dr. Bentley, Hergesheimer wearing the mantle of Pater, Mencken wearing the mantle of Juvenal. They all became intolerably uppish. Cant, which can hide behind laughter as well as tears, crept into their sophistication and urbanity. Their aloofness grew snobbish, their snobbishness smug. They seemed to exclaim, "I have a vast comic vision!" with all the naive rapture of Emma Bovary exclaiming, "J'ai un amant!"

They had their merits, of course; even if they now seem superficial and a little bogus, we must remember that they replaced far worse writers and knew how, on occasion, to be amusing and fluent and polished. Further, they protested against the stuffiness and philistinism that still dominated American culture. But once they had opened our eyes to what was wrong, not only had they served their purpose, but they had also opened our eyes to what was wrong with them. They were slain in their own crusade.

The present book, which the publishers intimate is a kind of literary autobiography, is actually no more than a series of papers describing the gestation and birth of Cabell's many books. The work of a man who is interested in and talks about nobody but himself, it is tedious and garrulous to the point of absurdity. The only interest I can find in these solemn footnotes to Cabell's novels is a clue to the misconception through which Cabell overreached himself as a writer. For it is not that he was originally without taste or talent. But he had the taste and talent of the dilettante along with the aspirations and pretentions of a great genius, and so nothing would satisfy him short of creating, like Balzac, a vast and many-volumed cosmos. The courage this required was admirable, but it might better have been traded for an equal amount of artistic self-knowledge. For Cabell as a major artist has been plainly a failure, and the Biography of Manuel—scattered though it may be with brief felicities—is already a necropolis. LOUIS KRONENBERGER

Beauty and the Beast

THE WHITE HORSES OF VIENNA AND OTHER STORIES. By Kay Boyle. Harcourt, Brace and Company. $2.50.

ACTOR'S BLOOD. By Ben Hecht. Covici-Friede. $2.

LIKE most volumes of short stories, these two miss the particular literary virtues which we are in the habit of calling, for lack of better terms, reality and solidity. In their different ways they succeed in being almost completely insubstantial. They can be read more easily than they can be believed, and if they can be believed they are scarcely to be remembered. In each case the matter is very much modified by a manner—in the first case, modulated to a point just this side of death, and in the second case, exaggerated until contact is lost with any life we know. The only resemblance, indeed, between two books which sound and look so little like each other grows out of their common preoccupation with style. But in the long run that resemblance will seem of more consequence than the differences which it is so fascinating at the moment to define.

By style I mean here not so much a way of handling words as a way of telling stories. Miss Boyle's admirers will insist upon the importance and indeed the preciousness of her words, but there is more to her than that—or, if it is true that her triumph is of the negative sort I have indicated, there is less. Considered verbally, her style is far from perfect; it is sometimes obscure, it can be needlessly infantile, and here and there it is bad.

> She stood very close, casting sharp looks at Dr. Heine, watching his slender, delicate hands at work, seeing the dark, silky hairs that grew on the backs of them and the black hair brushed smooth on his head. Even the joints of his tall, elegant frame seemed to be oiled with some special, suave lubricant that was evil as the Orient to their clean, Nordic hearts.

In six lines she has written, if my count is right, five pairs of adjectives. No, the significant item here is her mention of the hairs that grew on the back of Dr. Heine's hand. Miss Boyle never lets a hero go without a description of the hairs on the back of his hand, or on his forearm, or on the side of his face

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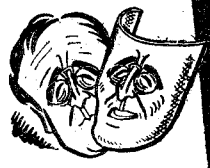

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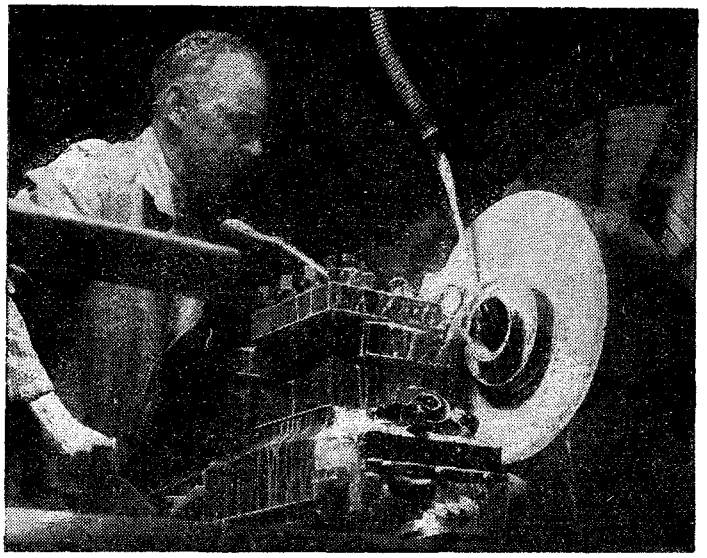

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GENERAL ELECTRIC

which happens to be turned into the narrow, brilliant beam of her style. Sometimes they are golden, sometimes they are silver-white; but they are always noted, and often they are the biggest thing we are allowed to know concerning the man in question. Not his ideas, his motives, his character, the whole outline of his flesh and spirit; merely this or some other image which flies from him as we look and which Miss Boyle plays with through twenty or thirty skilful pages. She is willing to work out such an image to the stage of exhaustion—and to let an emotion go undetermined. It was "insolence, or gentleness, or love," she says; it was "whiskey, or madness, or love," she says a hundred and fifty pages later. She is being a poet, I suppose. But poetry is a cruder, a plainer, a more important thing than this. And if that is true, Miss Boyle is altogether too fine for her job. I like to read her; I like the foxes and swans, the horses and wild birds she relies on to fill her pages with the motion she cannot find in man. But just because her people are motionless, like frost-people on a pane of glass, I deny that they are interesting in the way that men and women in stories can be interesting.

Using what seems at first blush to be a directer and more virile method, the method of the newspaper reporter, Mr. Hecht gets in the end an even less credible result. Certainly he cannot be accused of the delicate touch. He is so far from being obsessed by swans and foxes that he can say of the murdered actress's room in his first story: "All in all it looked as if Marcia had been done to death by a herd of bison." Another actress is "a vest-pocket edition of Duse"; somebody's house is now his "roost" and now his "bailiwick"; a simple departure is of course a "hegira"; and the disposal of evidence after a crime becomes "post crime evidence disposal." That is how fine Mr. Hecht's style is, considered verbally. Considered in terms of narrative art it is still less fine. The people are not permitted to show themselves in action until several pages of fireworks—debased Menckenese—have been set off in the attempt to place them for us, morally and socially. Then the action begins; and it is always so swollen with overemphasis, so chromo in its coloring, so bearlike in its morality, so smoky with the cigars of imagination, so obviously forced, so grossly felt, that we do not believe a word we have heard. Mr. Hecht is sometimes witty, and I really rather like the elephantine way in which he steams up; but at best his stories are feature stories which will be forgotten on Monday. Coming to him after Miss Boyle's diet of the thinnest and crispest Continental wafers I thought I would eat good plain American bread. But it was baker's bread, less nourishing than advertised.

MARK VAN DOREN

Revolutionary Mythology

INTRODUCTION TO DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM. By August Thalheimer. Translated by Simpson and Weltner. Covici-Friede. $2.

THE philosophy of dialectical materialism has always been the great doctrinal mystery of Marxism. It has received more varied interpretation, in an extensive foreign literature, than any other aspect of Marx's thought. The present account is an elementary but creditable version of the "orthodox" brand, and although he was repudiated by the Communist International for trivial political differences, the author easily outranks the official philosophical spokesmen. The translators have done, on the whole, a good job.

The very simplicity and fidelity of Thalheimer's exposition throw into glaring focus the weaknesses of this monistic ortho-

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dox world view which holds that since everything is "dialectically interrelated" every theory of being entails a theory of politics and vice versa. Applied to the history of philosophy, this leads to some shocking over-simplifications; applied to problems of philosophy, it produces multiple ambiguities and basic errors.

Practically the sole methodical principle that Thalheimer brings to the study of philosophy is the view that every system is to be "explained" in terms of the mode of production prevalent in its time, and that no problem of philosophy is so recondite that it cannot be "ultimately" traced to some issue in the class struggle. This involves a systematic neglect of proximate causes and a failure to distinguish between two questions: what determines the genesis of an idea, and what determines the social acceptance of an idea. The result of this confusion leads to the attempt to explain the differences between philosophers in terms of the social conditions they share in common, and encourages the use of grandiose formulas as a substitute for analysis. For example, in discussing ancient philosophy Thalheimer writes: "All the fundamental ideas in Heraclitus are determined, are conditioned [which is it? Or do these terms mean the same?] by the characteristic class relations of his time." More particularly, he adds, Heraclitus was a member of the Ephesan aristocracy. Well, Thales and Parmenides, Anaxagoras and Democritus, like practically all Greek philosophers, were members of their municipal aristocracies, and the class relations were the same for all of them. How, then, account for the differences between them, even for the simple division which Thalheimer draws between the materialists and idealists?

Nor does the author fare more happily when he comes to modern philosophy. With no great regard for consistency he admits that other factors besides class relations enter into play, but asserts that "in spite of great temporal and local differences between particular schools the universal counter-revolutionary and reactionary class character of the modern American and European bourgeoisie expresses itself in a host of characteristics which are common to all schools of bourgeois philosophy." The only two common characteristics listed are opposition to materialism and irrationalism. To assert that these two features characterize all schools of "bourgeois" philosophy is to reveal scandalous ignorance. Simplistic formulas enable one to economize not only on thought but on knowledge.

The analytic difficulties of orthodox monistic dialectical materialism are, if anything, even graver. For it is questionable whether the basic notions with which it operates—the unity and penetration of opposites, development by contradiction—are meaningful, especially when applied to natural phenomena. To begin with, the terms contradiction, opposition, and antagonism, which Thalheimer lumps together, are sharply distinguished by most modern philosophers. *Things* cannot contradict each other; only *propositions* (or *judgments*) can be contradictory, and these are not natural facts in the sense in which things in space and time are. Nor do things struggle with one another except in an obviously metaphorical sense. Struggle is an attribute of living behavior. Hegel, believing that nature is an objective expression of consciousness, consistently asserted that all natural development can be conceived as a struggle of opposites, but it is logically impossible for a materialist to subscribe to this. Yet not only is Thalheimer committed to this view; like his orthodox brethren he affirms that the universe is dialectically interrelated and that its changes are necessarily progressive, particularly in the social realm. The upshot is a cosmic evolutionary optimism according to which the dialectic processes in nature and society make the

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realization of communism inevitable. Oddly enough, such a philosophy reveals the two characteristics which, according to Thalheimer, all forms of bourgeois philosophy possess today, namely, idealism, in the assumption that the universe is friendly, and irrationalism, in the assumption that unconscious processes are purposive. Such a variety of antithetical elements enter into this philosophy that it is possible for Thalheimer to defend three mutually incompatible theories of truth at once—the Hegelian coherence theory, a crude form of the correspondence theory, and a still cruder form of the predictive theory.

Properly understood, dialectical materialism is a form of historical, experimental naturalism which stresses the role of human activity, under determinate conditions, in transforming the social world. The fatal weakness of orthodox dialectical materialism is that although it recognizes the important, even if limited, function of human intelligence and activity in transforming the world, it stresses metaphysical dogmas according to which intelligence is either unnecessary or impossible.

SIDNEY HOOK

Shorter Notices

THE IRON LAND. By Stanley Burnshaw. Philadelphia: The Centaur Press. $2.

What reputation Stanley Burnshaw has as a poet he has obtained by writing unpretentious lyrics which are authentic and effective. As a lyric poet Burnshaw has been chiefly concerned up to this time with creating a mood out of quick impulses and fragile decorations, of which love, evening flowers, and bird-inhabitated landscapes were the essential materials. In this new book, however, he has attempted poetry of a very different genre, more direct and realistic. "The Iron Land" is made up of groupings of poems which work into a narrative of a sort that gives the reactions of a white-collar worker to life within a "typical steel mill." Here and there throughout the book are poems which according to Mr. Burnshaw's note to the reader are not an integral part of his story, but which convey his "personal doubts, deliberations, escapes into a New World directive." Whatever the function of these particular poems, they are the best in the book, and probably will be remembered some time after the sequence is forgotten.

BELOMOR. By Maxim Gorki. Harrison Smith and Robert Haas. $3.

First of the links to be built in Russia's new system of inland waterways was the Baltic–White Sea Canal. It was built in twenty months between 1931-33. It is over 140 miles long and was constructed by thousands of prisoners, male and female, political and criminal, under the supervision of the G.P.U. Because the prisoners had to learn the building trades necessary to accomplish the work and because the construction was part of the Five-Year Plan, the enterprise was officially launched as a rehabilitation scheme; the prisoners were not doing forced labor, they were being "reforged." They also received commuted sentences and decorations. So praiseworthy and unique was the venture considered that some thirty of the most prominent Russian writers were sent from Moscow to write it up conjointly. The result is a startlingly uniform series of naively inflated sales talks to launch required occupational therapy, a book that for all its recomposed case-histories, technical reports, and wall-newspaper columns, leaves much unanswered. Namely, why should an American reader who condemns the method by which roadbuilders are trained on Georgia chain gangs be expected to admire the method that built Belomor?

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DRAMA

Symposium

THERE are always those who rise to remark that the best of talk cannot make a play. I have, indeed, known certain persons so fanatically devoted to this particular dogma that they would doubtless invoke it even in the case of "The End of Summer," now happily current at the Guild Theater. To such as they I will, however, not deign a reply for the simple reason that the excellence of Mr. Behrman's talk has the effect which any particular excellence always has—provided, of course, that it is really excellent. It makes one forget, for the moment at least, whatever other kinds the universe may afford and becomes for the time all anyone could ask. Listening to such talking as his characters achieve, one is inclined to exclaim, as Anthony once did on a quite different occasion and apropos a quite different activity:

> The nobleness of life
> Is to do thus: when such a mutual pair
> And such a twain can do 't.

In the new play, as in the last two before it, Mr. Behrman has lifted his talkers and their themes straight out of the world around him. Once more Miss Ina Claire, sparkling as ever, is cast in the role of an indulged and indulgent woman, and once more she is surrounded by a group of passionate men whose verbal bombs—often hurled at one another with the most vicious intent—somehow burst harmlessly over her head like so much fireworks. Anxious only to be loved, she is equally willing to endow a hospital for the sinister psychoanalyst—played with diabolical suavity by Osgood Perkins—or to finance a radical magazine for the two nice college boys determined to put an end to her and her kind. And while the world rocks around her—or at least while the other characters assure her that it does—her only contribution to the solution of world problems is the brilliant suggestion that calamities are on twice the scale they used to be simply because the women (who make up one-half of the population, remember) insist on taking part in them now instead of staying quietly at home as they used to do.

What these personages talk about is precisely what everybody talks about today: the blessing or the curse of wealth, the problem of unemployment, the brave new world which either is or isn't about to emerge. And the conclusions they reach are no more conclusive than those being achieved in a thousand drawing-rooms at precisely the same moment. Indeed, the conclusion of the play finds everybody very much as they were found at the beginning. There was never much doubt that the daughter of wealth would end by taking the young radical suitor and hoping for the best. If the Machiavellian psychoanalyst does make one serious mistake, he is merely convinced that he will not make it again; and Miss Claire, of course, is beyond the reach of argument or fact. Whatever fate—and it is all still dark—the others may meet, one is certain that her invincible triviality will carry her through. Hers is the last word; for at the end of the play she is developing a lively personal interest in the second of the young radicals. It is true that, for the moment, she doubts the propriety of financing an enterprise whose chief aim is the destruction of her and her world. But the eager editor explains that to do so would only be, after all, to "anticipate the inevi-

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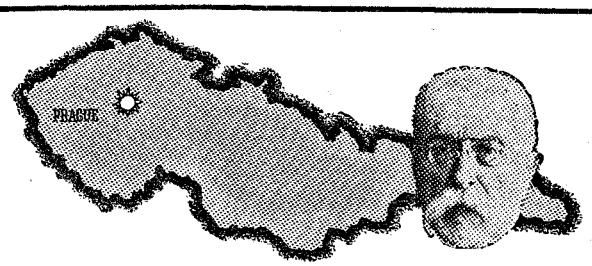

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table," and upon her bright exclamation, "Now wouldn't that be clever of me," the curtain goes down.

Among other things "The End of Summer" is a brilliant example of the way in which Mr. Behrman has solved the problem of writing pure comedy in an atmosphere which so many are ready to say makes pure comedy either impossible or at least impertinent. After his first play, "The Second Man," he obviously concluded that he did not wish to continue to deal merely with the timeless themes which have served for the whole tradition of artificial comedy, and there was the period to which "Meteor" belongs, during which it seemed possible that he might sacrifice his particular gift to the conviction that he must be "important" in a way that comedy of his sort cannot possibly be. A less sure instinct than his would either have followed this false lead or in some other way perverted his genius for a kind of wit which is essentially a pure and disinterested illumination. He might, for example, have turned to tendentious satire, for which he is temperamentally too skeptical and too balanced; or he might, on the other hand, have fallen into a merely cynical nihilism equally foreign to his urbane and generous spirit. Instead, however, he happily invented a novel kind of comedy which deals in no merely trivial fashion with controversial issues and yet affords full play to his essentially critical and skeptical mind. It is, that is to say, a kind of comedy in which the protagonists of various points of view, each equally endowed with eloquence and intelligence and wit, state their cases and expose the weakness of their adversaries while the spectator stands by, not so much cynically enjoying the discomfiture of each as delighting in the insights which are afforded into both the problems themselves and the characters of those who are trying to solve them. Such comedies are neither tendentious on the one hand nor trivial on the other. They are comedies of illumination. They turn to the uses of the moment the most valuable of comedy's gifts—the gift of disinterested insight. In "The End of Summer" the conversation is infinitely varied. Sometimes it bubbles, sometimes it rises to eloquence, sometimes it explodes into skyrockets of wit. But it is always delightful and always illuminating.

JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH

FILMS

The Misunderstood

NO STORY can be more interesting than the story of a person who is underestimated or misunderstood. There is no anxiety like that which we feel as we watch a victim of human error—a virtuous victim, preferably, though our sympathies can be touched in a cause not noble. All we need to know about the hero is something which his enemies do not know; or his friends, or his superiors, or the world in general. Then we are ready for the tale of how he is scorned, despised, and wrongfully accused; then we are ready to sit in a theater and behold the slow stages by which he attains to recognition. The sense of justice is probably the most dramatic sense we have, and by the same token the recognition scene is the most powerful scene of which drama is capable. It can be, in fact, almost intolerable. It is then that we weep.

Perhaps any good story has somewhere in it a touch of the Cinderella theme, but two current films have more than

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that; they build themselves entirely around it, they depend for their whole success upon our known inability to resist it. The first of them, "The Prisoner of Shark Island" (Center Theater), comes perilously near to overusing it, with the result that an hour of the film is painful; but the pleasure which comes with the hero's vindication at last is enough to save what has gone before, and enough to prove that there is no such thing as excess in the drama of misunderstanding. The hero, Dr. Samuel Mudd (Warner Baxter), is taken, as it happens, from history, for he is the Dr. Mudd of Maryland who set John Wilkes Booth's broken leg after the assassination of Lincoln and who served four years on Shark Island in the Gulf of Mexico for the "crime."

I put the word in quotation marks because we of the audience know that Dr. Mudd was innocent. We know it because we see him on the fatal evening of 1865 when Booth knocked at his door and begged for relief from pain. We know how innocent he was of any knowledge concerning his patient's identity, and we approve of him as the charitable and reasonable man we are made to see. But the soldiers who came down from Washington did not know of his innocence, nor when they found Booth's boot in the house could they believe Dr. Mudd to be anything but a conniving villain; nor would the American public be satisfied with anything less than the conviction of every last person connected even by accusation with the "conspiracy"; nor did the military court mind in the least committing judicial murder. What we are treated to then is a series of tortures, beginning with the trial at Washington and ending with the antics of a sadist sergeant on Shark Island, which we alone know to be unjustified by any fact. The historian who studies the case may have his reasons for supposing Dr. Mudd innocent. But we *know*. And it is on that knowledge that the story-teller builds his case, keeping us in suspense for as long as he thinks we can bear it, and rewarding us at the end with a glimpse of the good doctor returning to his front door. The film takes every advantage of its theme, and takes advantage also of the fact that the Civil War is still the richest background available to America story. I have seen few pictures, this year or any other, more completely interesting than "The Prisoner of Shark Island."

"The Story of Louis Pasteur" (Strand) is less interesting only because the elements from which it extracts its irony are less simple and visible. They are not a leg, a boot, a knock at the door in the night; they are the bacilli of anthrax and hydrophobia. The hero, in other words, is a Scientist, and so there is a good deal of hocus-pocus intended to give us the illusion that we know what Pasteur (Paul Muni) saw when he looked into his microscope; and there is the usual romancing about Science with which we are already too familiar. But it does not matter much in a story which has such a man for its hero. Here again we have the drama of the underrated; we have the ignorant scorn of academic doctors, we have the struggling genius in his laboratory and his home, and better yet we have the famous incidents of the Arbois sheep and the hydrophobia cases from Russia. The director, William Dieterle, has wisely placed his emphasis upon these incidents—particularly upon the one at Arbois, where Pasteur's recognition by the great Lister provides the first and best of a series of climaxes culminating in the ovation at the Academy. And the scornful doctors, Charbonnet, Rossignol, Radisse, are skilfully used as lighting for the triumphs when they come. A series of triumphs is doubtless less dramatic than a single big one toward which everything has tended; but that is merely another way of saying that "The Story of Louis Pasteur" is not quite so sustained a success-story as "The Prisoner of Shark Island."

MARK VAN DOREN

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With this issue the Labor section is dropped because the subject-matter, more than ever before, is too closely integrated with the whole content of *The Nation* to be dealt with separately. We shall devote more and not less space to labor and related subjects. Forthcoming issues will contain articles by Louis Adamic, Benjamin Stolberg, Carleton Beals, Lillian Symes, and others.

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EDITORIAL CONTEST

For College Students

The Foreign Policy Association and The Nation, joint sponsors of the contest announced in The Nation of February 5, present this list of

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Dulles, A. W., and Armstrong, H. F. *Can We Be Neutral?* Harper & Brothers. $1.50.
Jessup, P. C., and Deak, Francis. *Neutrality: Its History, Economics and Law,* 4 vol., Columbia University Press. $3.75 each.
Millis, Walter. *The Road to War,* Houghton Mifflin. $3.
Seymour, Charles. *American Neutrality, 1914-1917.* New Haven, Yale University Press, 1935. $2.
Young, Eugene J. *Powerful America,* Frederick Stokes. $3.

PAMPHLETS

Goslin, R. A., Editor. *War Tomorrow—Will We Keep Out?* Foreign Policy Association (Headline Books) 35c; paper 25c.
Wright, Quincy. *The United States and Neutrality,* University of Chicago Press. (Public Policy Pamphlet) 25c.

MAGAZINES

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*Published by the *Foreign Policy Association,* 8 West 40th Street, New York, N. Y.

CONTEST CLOSES MARCH 15

Joseph Wood Krutch says:

BOY MEETS GIRL. Cort Theater. Rough and ready satire on Hollywood, but probably the funniest thing of its kind since "Once in a Lifetime."

DEAD END. Belasco Theater. A play about gangsters in the making on an East River waterfront. More a good show than a great drama, but a very good show indeed.

ETHAN FROME. National Theater. The apparently impossible task of dramatization of Edith Wharton's novel achieved with conspicuous success. Outstanding performances by Pauline Lord, Ruth Gordon, and Raymond Massey.

JUMBO. Hippodrome. Paul Whiteman, Jimmy Durante, and a remarkable clown named A. Robbins surrounded by acrobats and animals. Literally better than a circus.

LIBEL. Henry Miller Theater. Exciting English courtroom play. Surprisingly probable for this sort of thing and superbly acted.

PARADISE LOST. Longacre Theater. Clifford Odets's complicated picture of a family composed exclusively of pathological futilitarians. He calls it a picture of the middle class but it strikes me as somewhat less than typical.

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE. Plymouth Theater. Amazingly successful adaptation, brilliantly staged and acted. A thoroughly delightful evening in the theater.

VICTORIA REGINA. Broadhurst Theater. Delightful series of scenes from Laurence Housman's drama stunningly acted by Helen Hayes and others. Fairer to the matron queen than Strachey but funny nevertheless and charming besides.

Mark Van Doren says:

AH, WILDERNESS. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Eugene O'Neill's touching and searching comedy of high-school days translated into a film which charms by its own right. Full of recognitions for the middle-aged.

A NIGHT AT THE OPERA. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. The Marx Brothers in their best picture to date. Hilarious and brilliant.

ANNIE OAKLEY. R.K.O. A minor American masterpiece based on the life of Buffalo Bill's best-loved sharpshooter. Barbara Stanwyck as Annie Oakley divides the honors with Sitting Bull.

MODERN TIMES. Charles Chaplin. Charlie Chaplin returns to the screen disguised as his old self and fulfils every expectation. Should be seen by everyone—and heard, for he has sound effects.

MUTINY ON THE BOUNTY. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. A long and noisy film, elaborated tirelessly from the famous books by Nordhoff and Hall; but distinguished by the great acting of Charles Laughton as Captain Bligh.

THE GHOST GOES WEST. Alexander Korda. René Clair's first film in English, with scenes in Scotland and the United States. Clever, satirical, and fanciful, but without the master touch.

WAY DOWN EAST. Fox. D. W. Griffith told the story better and more simply, but it remains a good story for movie purposes, and pictorially this version is very fine.

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Letters to the Editors

THE LOS ANGELES BORDER PATROL

Dear Sirs: The border patrol which has been carrying on in California is still important news to the public. My husband and I have just returned from a trip to Blythe, California, from there to Quartsite, Arizona, then to Yuma, Arizona. We have observed and analyzed this move on the part of the Los Angeles police, and it seems to us one more very serious stab at our civil liberties.

We were in Blythe four years ago and met a number of the citizens there. At that time there was an active Socialist local. The merchants were tolerant, approachable people. This time we found almost no independent merchants. All liberal groups had disintegrated. The chain stores have moved in and the local Chamber of Commerce is now the dominant organization. The day before we arrived that group had entertained a speaker from the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, under whose influence they had sent a letter heartily indorsing Chief of Police Davis of Los Angeles for protecting their town from those criminals who are trying to enter California. Blythe has no railroad and is about three miles from the state line. Los Angeles has eight fully armed policemen at every entrance of a highway into the state.

One family from Oklahoma had put all their possessions into a Ford car and started for California, where they had relatives and sought a milder winter climate. They were found with only ten dollars and were turned back with this small amount of money facing two hundred miles of desert highway before reaching a town of any size where they could expect to get aid.

In Yuma we went to see the sheriff, who seemed rather disinterested. He said that before Los Angeles took it upon itself the town was driving the hobos out of the "jungle," but now it let them alone. He suggested we go to the "jungle" and see what we could find. The inhabitants were very bitter, had no feeling of hope or responsibility toward society; they could plainly see there was little chance of justice for them. They told us of several persons who, trying to pass the border, had been beaten and badly abused, but this we were not able to verify. One man was making coffee in a large tin can. That morning he had done a family washing for which he was paid fifteen cents and had spent it for coffee for the crowd.

We took two young men, twenty-two and twenty-five years of age, to dinner. They had not eaten for three days. Both had had a high-school education and one could boast of two years of college. He wanted very much to study law. They were both staunch Republicans, well mannered and evidently from good homes. They believed that the NRA was a great infringement on people's rights. On their arrival at the state line they were met with the questions, "Any money? any work? Well, this is as far west as you go, young man."

We had an interview with the Los Angeles officer on the highway bridge, who was also patrolling the railroad bridge by flashing a light down between the cars as the freight train passed slowly by. He first denied that his instructions were to finger-print the travelers. When Mr. Packard took the instructions out of his pocket, the officer's eyes grew large with amazement. He said that they were only finger-printing the ones who looked like criminals. When I asked him if he did not know that these people had a constitutional right to travel where they pleased, he answered me with, "What do you mean? We are down here at the orders of the chief of police of Los Angeles."

These policemen at the border are drawing pay for full time but are given ten days out of the month to go home in police cars to see their families. This shows what a great cost it is to the taxpayer.

ROSE MARIE PACKARD

Pasadena, February 10

EMANCIPATOR

Dear Sirs: It is hard to believe that what I have always looked upon as one of America's outstanding clean magazines, presenting and discussing correctly matters of nation-wide importance and of interest to all readers who can afford the purchase price, would stoop so low as to publish such a slanderous, disgusting full-page cartoon of Dr. Francis E. Townsend as that appearing on page 36 of the issue of January 8.

Gentlemen, you should be ashamed of yourselves, one and all, for you must know that you have slandered one of America's outstanding citizens, one of the most widely discussed men in public life today, a man who has kindled a ray of hope in the hearts of millions of America's aged, downtrodden, and neglected citizens. He has a clear vision of the nation's needs which, up to the present time, no one has disputed except a few crooked politicians, high-salaried brain-trusters, Congressmen and Senators, and some nit-wit editors and specialty writers who should be confined in some institution for the feeble-minded.

Dr. Francis E. Townsend is an outstanding humanitarian, also a Christian, a believer in the Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule. He is a man whose name will be venerated and honored in the pages of American history as another great emancipator.

G. H. YOUNG

Walhalla, Mich., February 18

HUNGARIAN PRISON

Dear Sirs: After my eight and a half years' confinement in Hungarian prisons, allow me to call your attention to the crime of the Hungarian juridical authorities who, disregarding all dictates of humanity and acting contrary to legal requirements, are trying finally to break down and even to kill Mathias Rakosi, the former People's Commissar of the Hungarian Soviet Republic.

Solitary confinement means that the prisoner is locked in a cell never exceeding eighteen cubic meters in size, where even in summer not a ray of sunlight ever enters. The damp walls of this cell are white and yellow from saltpeter, and the prisoner must wear winter clothing even in summer owing to the cold. With the exception of the guard, conversation with whom is forbidden, the prisoner never sees anybody. Food, in any case scanty, is reduced by a third. Better food at one's own expense, visits by relatives, books, paper, and writing materials are not allowed.

According to the law, solitary confinement can extend only for one-third of the sentence, not exceeding one year for sentences of up to five years, two years for sentences of up to ten years, and three years as the absolute limit in case of higher sentences. In addition the law

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provides that strict solitary confinement may be carried out only where the health of the prisoner permits. After the prisoner has served the first half of his sentence or after ten years in the case of prisoners serving life sentences, strict solitary confinement is forbidden.

How then do the fascist juridical despots of Hungary deal with Mathias Rakosi? Rakosi was arrested for his political activity in 1925 and sentenced to eight and a half years' imprisonment. During these eight and a half years he was held more than seven years in solitary confinement, not to mention the many disciplinary punishments which he had to suffer on account of his desperate struggles against the inhuman prison regime.

At the end of his sentence, that is, in 1934, Rakosi was not released; a charge was brought against him connected with his participation in the government of the Soviet Republic in Hungary in 1919, a charge for which the bill of indictment had been prepared fifteen years before but which, despite the request of Rakosi's defending counsel, had not been dealt with. On the termination of his first sentence the court sentenced Rakosi for the second time—this time to life imprisonment.

Rakosi's counsel requested that the two sentences should run concurrently, since the charges in the second trial referred to an earlier time (1919) than those of the first trial (1925). The court did not grant this request, but vindictively brought a charge against Rakosi's counsel because he accused the public prosecutor of breaking the law. Rakosi was brought to the Szeged Prison and despite his ten years' previous imprisonment without a break, is now treated as a "new prisoner." He is condemned to three years' solitary confinement; all the privileges allowed by law are withdrawn from him. The fascist juridical bureaucrats refuse to recognize the fact that Rakosi has been in strict solitary confinement almost without a break ever since 1925, not only in defiance of the law, but in spite of the fact that he is broken in health.

The fascist rulers of Hungary do this because they want to get rid of Rakosi, they want to kill him, in order to rob the Hungarian proletariat of one of its best front-rank fighters. All cultured people, all who have a spark of human feeling in them, must unanimously protest against this new barbarism of the fascist regime in Hungary.

LETTAU SANTO

Moscow, January 15

WRITE A LETTER TO CALIFORNIA!

Dear Sirs: Herbert Solow mentioned in his letter in your issue of February 5 that the California Board of Prison Terms and Paroles would not be meeting again for four months. Technically this is correct; actually the board meets this month. There is nothing to hinder it from reviewing the cases of the criminal-syndicalism prisoners now serving indeterminate sentences of from one to fourteen years in California state prisons, and setting their sentences. In the absence of widespread expressions of opinion, the board is the more likely to take a definite step now, and the sentences may be expected to be the maximum.

The agricultural interests in California feel that their terroristic methods, labor camps, vigilante action, and anti-union propaganda have effectively put a stop to further protests from the migratory workers or their representatives. It is extremely important, therefore, that those who wish to see these young fighters for the rights of labor and of free expression of opinion in America freed from prison should write without delay asking that their sentences be set at the minimum. Address letters to the Honorable Frank C. Sykes, California Board of Prison Terms and Paroles, Kohl Building, San Francisco.

ELLA WINTER

Carmel, Cal., February 16

Contributors

BENJAMIN STOLBERG, author with Warren Vinton of "The Economic Consequences of the New Deal," is perhaps America's leading controversial journalist. His analysis of the Socialist Party let loose in the columns of *The Nation* a deluge of correspondence, mostly denunciatory. His estimate of Huey Long was no less lively, though its subject had fewer champions among the letter-writers. Within a few weeks Mr. Stolberg will contribute a definitive appraisal of John L. Lewis, particularly in his role as the leader of the coming American labor movement.

HAROLD J. LASKI, who spent four years teaching politics in American universities, mainly Harvard, has been since 1926 professor of political science at the University of London. The list of his works is impressive both for length and content: among them are "The Foundations of Sovereignty," "Democracy in Crisis," and "The State in Theory and Practice." Mr. Laski will shortly arrive in the United States and will lecture on the European situation at the New School for Social Research in New York.

MORRIE RYSKIND has for some time been earnestly occupied in exposing the follies of politics in such works as "Of Thee I Sing" and "Let 'Em Eat Cake," of which, with George S. Kaufman, he was coauthor. He is now in Hollywood, where he will act as *The Nation's* spy and correspondent.

JAMES T. FARRELL is the author of the "Studs Lonigan" trilogy, that devastating account of a boy's life on the Chicago streets. His projects for the future comprise twenty-four more volumes dealing with various of the "Studs Lonigan" characters.

RAYMOND GRAM SWING has been Berlin correspondent of the Chicago *Daily News* and London correspondent of the Philadelphia *Public Ledger* and the New York *Evening Post*. He was an editor and the Washington correspondent of *The Nation* during 1934 and 1935. He is now devoting a large part of his time to radio broadcasting on politics from Washington.

LOUIS KRONENBERGER has been for some time a regular reviewer for the New York *Times* and *The Nation*. He is the editor of "An Anthology of Light Verse" and "An Eighteenth Century Miscellany," which covers English literature from Swift to Blake.

MARK VAN DOREN is the author of several volumes of poetry, the latest being "A Winter Diary and Other Poems," of one novel, "The Transients," and of many critical articles in *The Nation* and elsewhere. His official occupation is associate professor of English at Columbia University.

ARCHIBALD MacLEISH is another poet who makes his living by doing something else. Perhaps Mr. MacLeish's best-known volumes are "The Hamlet of A. MacLeish" and "Conquistador." When he is not writing poetry he is being an editor of *Fortune*—and vice versa.

SIDNEY HOOK is chairman of the Department of Philosophy at New York University. He has written "The Meaning of Marx" and "Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx."

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